

Department of Systematic Theology
University of Helsinki
Helsinki

FAITH AND WILL

VOLUNTARINESS OF FAITH IN CONTEMPORARY ANALYTIC THEISTIC PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Dan-Johan Eklund

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This study is a critical examination of the views about the voluntary aspect of religious faith in contemporary analytic theistic philosophy of religion. The background of the question is the variety of opinions regarding the voluntariness or involuntariness of religious faith. The study examines different propositional attitudes, such as belief, hope, and acceptance, which are taken to be involved in the cognitive-epistemic aspect of religious faith. Another important theme concerns the practical dimension of religious faith and the attitudes it involves. Questions having to do with the emotional and evaluative features of religious faith are also touched upon. In addition, certain traditional theological topics pertaining to voluntariness of faith are addressed. Apart from the critical evaluation, this study develops one view of faith, that is, faith as propositional hope. The method used is philosophical conception and argumentation analysis.

In the first chapter I analyse the general views of analytic theists on the nature of faith and propositional belief. In the second chapter the central topic is how beliefs relevant to faith are acquired and the implications this issue has for questions about voluntariness of faith. Richard Swinburne's and Alvin Plantinga's accounts of faith are the main focus of this chapter. The third chapter is chiefly concerned with the possibility of believing without sufficient evidence; the permissibility of such believing is also addressed. Views elaborated by John Bishop and Jeff Jordan are central in this chapter. In the fourth chapter I analyse views which claim that faith need not entail belief and the impact of these views on issues concerning the voluntariness of faith. The chapter consists of views put forward by Robert Audi, William Alston, Louis Pojman, and J. L. Schellenberg. This chapter also includes the view of faith I defend, that is, faith as propositional hope.

The voluntary aspect of religious faith has been understood in different ways. The overall conclusion of this study is that the cognitive aspect of faith is in the main involuntary, though volitional acts can have some effect on it. The same goes for the emotional and evaluative aspects of religious faith. On the other hand, the practical dimension of faith seems to be largely a matter of voluntary choice and behaviour. These insights imply that from a philosophical viewpoint whether people perceive a given religious faith as a worthwhile and meaningful worldview is due to other factors than their direct voluntary choice, but it is their decision whether they commit themselves to the faith in question.

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INTRODUCTION

THE AIM OF THIS STUDY

This study is a critical examination of the views about the voluntary aspect of religious faith in contemporary analytic theistic philosophy of religion. The background of the question is the variety of opinions regarding the voluntariness or involuntariness of religious faith. Apart from the critical discussion and evaluation of various positions, the study seeks to advance one conception of faith without convinced belief, that is, faith as propositional hope, which is offered as a viable alternative for some religious doubters.

Analytic theistic philosophy of religion has dominated the modern Anglo-American philosophical discussion on religion ever since the 1970s, when the previous decades' questions concerning the cognitive meaning and purpose of religious language receded into the background and epistemological and metaphysical topics began to gain increasing attention again.¹ A noticeable feature of Analytic Theism has been a strong interest in these more traditional issues which are taken to be intertwined in religious worldviews.² The analytic theistic approaches to religion, in most cases to Christianity, are diverse, but the tradition nonetheless has certain general characteristics that distinguish it from other movements in contemporary philosophy of religion.

The theistic conception of God is typically seen to be at the core of Analytic Theism. According to the renowned theist Richard Swinburne, theism is the claim that God exists, which he takes to be equivalent to the claim that a person without a body exists, who is eternal, perfectly free, omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good, and the creator of all things.³ For the present purposes any elaborated notion of theism is not required (the subject is anyway controversial). We may regard theism simply as the claim that God exists, and a theist can be understood as a person who in some way embraces theism rather than rejects it in the way irreligious persons do.

Perhaps the most discussed topic in analytic theistic philosophy has been the relationship between faith and reason. The central question of this problem is whether faith is a rationally acceptable position and under what conditions it can be considered such. The topic is generally discussed from an apologetic point of view. In this respect the most notable theistic positions are Evidentialism in its different forms⁴ and Reformed Epistemology⁵. In brief, evidentialists strive to offer epistemic justification for religious belief by way of arguments for the truth of theism and Christianity, whereas Reformed epistemologists argue that holding religious belief can be reasonable without

¹ On the language-focused discussion, see e.g. Stiver 1996, ch. 3-4.

² For an overview on the subjects debated, see e.g. Peterson et al. 1991.

³ Swinburne 1979, 8-9. For a succinct elaboration of the theistic conception of God, see e.g. van Inwagen 2006, 18-36.

⁴ See e.g. Helm 2000; Moser 2010; Swinburne 2005.

⁵ See e.g. Alston 1991; Plantinga 2000; Plantinga and Wolterstorff 1983.

the support of such arguments. Besides these positions the analytic theistic tradition includes viewpoints of another kind, for example, ones that take advantage of the ideas of pragmatism, which is concerned with prudential justification of religious belief.⁶

Given the prominence of the problem of the relationship between faith and reason, it is surprising that analytic theists have not discussed very extensively the exact nature of faith. As J. L. Schellenberg points out, most philosophers are not concerned about the details of religious faith, but they simply hold that faith can either be equated with religious belief, that is, with believing that so-and-so, or that it entails such belief, and they subsequently focus on the justification of that belief.⁷ There is doubtless a truth in Schellenberg's claim. However, the discussion on the nature of faith that has taken place in analytic theistic philosophy has actually been quite diverse. For example, while the notion of belief has played a key role in the discussion, both of the suppositions Schellenberg mentioned—that faith is equal to or entails belief—has been called into question by analytic theists.⁸ In addition, the views of faith they have offered are divergent.

In this study I shall analyse the views of faith the theists have presented. The views will be considered especially from the perspective of the voluntariness of faith. My interest in this theme was aroused by the claim frequently made in analytic philosophy, namely that believing does not seem to be a matter of voluntary choice; we do not seem to choose our beliefs at will. This claim has a fairly straightforward impact on issues concerning faith and voluntariness, assuming that faith and belief are connected to each other. Consider the following questions, for example. If faith entails belief, how could faith be voluntary if belief is not voluntary? Might faith in this case have some other aspects that are voluntary? Then again, if the beliefs allegedly entailed by faith are not chosen at will, how are they acquired? What about the views of faith which supposedly do not entail belief—can choosing this kind of faith be a voluntary matter?

Besides such philosophical themes as mentioned above, issues concerning the voluntariness of faith have to do with certain traditional theological questions. They concern the supposed merit of faith on the one hand, and the role of God's grace in the acquisition of faith on the other. As to the former, especially the Roman Catholic Church has emphasised that faith is a virtue and as such meritorious.⁹ But this seems to presume that faith is voluntary, for presumably only voluntary acts can be praised. On the other hand, traditional Christianity asserts that faith is due to the supernatural grace of God and the promptings of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰ But if so, how could having faith be meritorious and how could it thus be a matter of a voluntary act?

⁶ See e.g. Jordan 2006.

⁷ Schellenberg 2005, 106.

⁸ See e.g. Bishop 2007; Pojman 2003.

⁹ See e.g. Swinburne 2005, 140.

¹⁰ See e.g. Swinburne 2005, 118-120.

The theological problems concerning the voluntariness of faith will be discussed to some extent in this study. They are related to philosophical themes, which are the main focus of this study. It should be noted, however, that in analytic theists' considerations philosophical and theological topics are quite often entangled with each other. Such entanglement is visible in this study, too, although it may be an undesirable feature: one could reasonably call for a sharp distinction between philosophical and theological reflections on faith (cf. section 4.5.2.).

While this study revolves around the notion of will and its derivatives, any metaphysical theory about the nature of will or free will is not presumed.¹¹ The same goes for the problem concerning the relationship between human will and God's foreknowledge or providence.¹² Though these issues are by no means irrelevant, they do not belong to the subjects of this study: in this study the focus is not on the metaphysical but, as one might say, on the psychological aspects of volitional activity. I shall operate with a fairly unproblematic distinction between voluntary and involuntary acts and states. For example, for a typical human being running, studying, and whistling belong to the group of voluntary acts, whereas sneezing, blushing, and falling ill have their place in the group of involuntary things. And these distinctions hold regardless of whether, say, the metaphysical view of theological determinism is true (the view claims that each and every event has been preordained by God).

In contemporary discussion there is no overview on the different accounts of faith that analytic theists have offered. The study at hand seeks to address this issue, which calls for conceptual clarification. In this respect the closest relative to this study is, as far as I know, John Bishop's useful but short and partly cursory article "Faith" (2010). An otherwise noteworthy book about faith, in general, written within analytic philosophy of religion, is William Lad Sessions's *The Concept of Faith: A Philosophical Investigation* (1994). The models of faith Lad Sessions develops bear a resemblance to and partly overlap analytic theists' conceptions. However, unlike in this study, Lad Sessions's focus is not primarily on the accounts of faith that analytic theists have elaborated.

With respect to the question of the voluntariness of faith a predecessor to this study is Louis Pojman's book *Religious Belief and the Will* (1986). Pojman, however, considers at quite some length historical views on the relationship between religious belief and the will, whereas this study concentrates on contemporary discussion. Pojman also mostly deliberates the voluntariness of religious belief, or belief in general, but this study discusses more broadly the voluntariness of faith—this already indicates that faith is not to be reduced to mere belief. In addition, though Pojman's book still includes considerations which are relevant to the contemporary discussion, much has been said on the voluntariness of faith after its publication, and it is this later discussion that the study at hand focuses on.

¹¹ On the metaphysics of free will, see e.g. van Inwagen 1983.

¹² On these topics, see e.g. Flint 1998; Zagzebski 1991.

My study proceeds as follows. In this introductory chapter I present some remarks on the philosophical assumptions and backgrounds of the study. They have to do with certain views largely shared by the analytic theists. William James's article "The Will to Believe" will also be briefly discussed, as his view is relevant for contemporary debate. In the first chapter, I will offer an overview on the analytic theists' views on the nature of faith and belief. The chapter will also clarify the research question of this study. In the second chapter, the key topic is how religious beliefs are acquired and the implications this issue has for questions concerning the voluntariness of faith. The views of Richard Swinburne and Alvin Plantinga are the main focus of this chapter. The third chapter shares the questions of the second chapter but primarily discusses the possibility of believing without sufficient evidence. The permissibility of such believing will also be addressed as part of the topic of the ethics of belief. Views elaborated by John Bishop and Jeff Jordan are central in this chapter. In the fourth chapter, I shall evaluate different views of faith without belief and their impact on issues concerning the voluntariness of faith. The chapter consist of views put forward by Robert Audi, William Alston, Louis Pojman, and J. L. Schellenberg. In this chapter I also present the view of faith I defend. The relevance of these themes to the main topic of this study should become clear in due course. In this connection it might also be noted that the later chapters of this study widely presuppose the conclusions of the earlier chapters.

ANALYTIC THEISM AND THE ASSUMPTIONS OF THIS STUDY

Some presuppositions shared by analytic theists are of significance to my study. I shall present the relevant suppositions briefly. To begin with, the philosophers whose views on faith are analysed in this study are mostly Christian theists, though there are also some exceptions. Some theists' views on faith are highly influenced by Christian thought and notions, but for the most part the discussion on the nature of faith has been fairly formal and depends only loosely, if at all, on Christian insights. This formality is echoed in this study, though one might ask whether it is a deficiency when the subject is specifically Christian faith.¹³ It may be that utilising Christian insights will increase its popularity in the future discussion. There are already some tendencies towards this direction.¹⁴

¹³ William Abraham has criticised philosophical discussion on the rationality of religious belief for similar reasons: "[...] the beliefs that really shape and determine Christian intellectual identity and existence are much more precise and specific than belief in God. They are constituted by profound convictions about the person of Christ, about the mysterious reality of the Holy Trinity, about the presence of the Holy Spirit in one's life, about the possibility and reality of forgiveness, about the existence of one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, and the like. It is these rather than some minimalist theism which really matters to the vast majority of religious believers. Yet until very recently these have received next to no attention on the part of philosophers interested in the rationality of religious belief. Somehow they are taken as secondary and peripheral." Abraham 1990, 434-435.

¹⁴ See e.g. Moser 2010; Plantinga 2000.

While the use of Christian ideas comes in different degrees, the thesis we may label as theological realism is widely presumed by the analytic theists. Following William Alston's general point of view on the issue, I propose to define theological realism as an interpretation of the function of religious language.¹⁵ Thus, theological realism is the view that at least some statements of religious language are factual statements. As such, the statements are either true or false depending on whether facts (reality, mind-independent world) are as the statements say they are. As for the facts, they obtain or exist independently of human conceptions of them and have not been created by human activity.¹⁶ Theological realism presumably entails some kind of correspondence theory of truth: the factual statement "God exists" is true if and only if God's existence is a fact.¹⁷

There may be an inclination to conceive theological realism not merely as an interpretation of religious language, but as the view that the factual statements of religion are, in fact, true.¹⁸ When understood in this stronger way, theological realism looks like a metaphysical view about what exists independently of human thought and conceptions. In this case, a theological realist would typically be a person who holds that mind-independent reality includes, among other things, a God of a certain nature. However, it is of crucial importance to realise here that advocating theological realism in the first linguistic sense does not as such entail adopting any specific stance on the truth value of the factual statements of a given religious language. So, being a linguistic theological realist does not imply being a metaphysical theological realist. Typical agnostics and atheists are also theological realists in the linguistic sense: they hold that religious language involves factual statements, albeit ones whose truth is doubtful, as agnostics hold, or false or probably so, as atheists argue.¹⁹

The noted distinction between linguistic and metaphysical theological realism is significant for our purposes. Analytic theists have not unanimously embraced the metaphysical version of theological realism, though they approve of it in the linguistic sense. In other words, though the theists hold fast to the view that religious language involves factual statements, they have not universally claimed that the statements are true beyond doubt. In this respect, the views of faith the theists have elaborated go together with agnosticism and, strikingly, some even begin to approximate atheistic

¹⁵ See Alston 1995; 1996b. See also Koistinen 2000, 28-29.

¹⁶ I suppose one could argue that central theological facts are in some sense mind-independent but have been created by human activity. This, however, is not theological realism but sounds more like a kind of theological constructivism or non-realism, which will be discussed soon.

¹⁷ In addition, theological realism about religious language naturally goes together with, though does not perhaps entail, the view that religious language about God can be understood fairly literally. That is, the way we speak about God does not in any significant manner differ from the straightforward way we talk about mundane things. See e.g. Alston 1989, ch. 1; Swinburne 1993, ch. 4-6. This univocal reading goes against the prominent analogical or negative theology's interpretations of religious language about God, which in some way problematise the direct applicability of our concepts to divine reality. On these themes, see e.g. Stiver 1996.

¹⁸ Cf. Poidevin 1996, 111.

¹⁹ See e.g. Mackie 1982.

positions.²⁰ Just how these views, perhaps especially the latter *prima facie* inconsistent view, can be possible, requires a further conceptual apparatus and will be addressed later in this study.

The competing view to theological realism is theological non-realism (or anti-realism or irrealism).²¹ This view comes up in various forms, but one of its distinctive features is to interpret religious language as having primarily some other function than expressing factual statements in the way a theological realist assumes. For example, a theological non-realist may argue that, just like the point of fictional edifying stories, the point of religious language is not so much to describe supernatural reality as to arouse certain favourable emotions or moral conduct.²² While some religious fables can perhaps be suitably interpreted in non-realistic terms, for analytic theists, at any rate, comprehensive non-realism about religious language is not a serious alternative to the realistic interpretation of such language. Realism is typically taken for granted (as, for example, this study will illustrate), and it does seem to convey the traditional and commonsensical description of certain parts of religious language.

In this connection one might also note that with reference to religion some philosophers might deem inadequate the dichotomy and debate between realism and different non-realistic positions. The insight behind this view could be, say, that the distinction does not do justice to the *sui generis* nature of religious discourse. Something like this appears to be the claim of the Wittgensteinian philosopher of religion D. Z. Phillips. While he seems to hold that God is real in religious life, by this he does not mean that some factual statement like “God exists” is true in the way a theological realist may argue. But neither does Phillips seem to suggest any non-realist view according to which God’s being real means that God-talk can be significant without having to suppose that it refers to some real object. Apparently, Phillips has some third option in his mind as regards religious language and God’s reality. Then again, Dan Stiver, for example, appears to imply that Phillips ultimately belongs to the non-realists’ group.²³

A further noteworthy presupposition of analytic theists relates to theological realism and explains their interest in the problem of the relationship between faith and reason. This is the supposition that faith has a

²⁰ See e.g. Audi 2011; Pojman 2003. Cf. Schellenberg 2005.

²¹ For our purposes it is not relevant to consider how different non-realistic positions differ from each other. All of them are anyway in contrast to theological realism. For some discussion on this theme, see e.g. Herrmann 2004.

²² For views akin to theological non-realism, see e.g. Braithwaite 1955; Cupitt 1980; Herrmann 2004; Le Poidevin 1996. I suppose a theological non-realist can understand religious language in two different ways. First, the non-realist may hold that religious language does not involve factual statements at all, though it may at first glance look like it does. This could be termed as some kind of linguistic theological non-realism. Second, the non-realist can argue that religious language does involve factual statements, but what one thinks about those statements as factual statements is wholly irrelevant, for the proper purpose of religious language should be conceived as something else than describing mind-independent reality. Unlike in the first case, in the second case the non-realist does not altogether deny linguistic theological realism but is rather indifferent to it.

²³ See Phillips 1993; Stiver 1996, 69-72.

close connection with epistemic attitudes, that is, attitudes whose truthfulness, plausibility, or justifiability can be evaluated in more or less general terms. This may mean that faith or some aspect of it is conceived of as comprising epistemic attitudes, such as epistemic beliefs about the factual statements of religion.²⁴ Then again, the supposition may also mean that even if the most central attitudes in faith are not conceived as epistemic attitudes, they are nonetheless taken to be held in a framework of epistemic attitudes, which have an effect on the reasonability of the attitudes held in faith.²⁵

The supposition that faith has a close link with epistemic attitudes plays an integral role in analytic theists' discussion on faith, and, as we will see, it also has relevance to the topic of the voluntariness of faith. However, this "epistemic link" supposition has been questioned by some philosophers of religion. First of all, a theological non-realist may see epistemic considerations as not very significant for the discussion on the nature of faith: if religious statements are not primarily meant to function as factual statements, it is perhaps not imperative to ask, like a theological realist might naturally do, whether the statements are true or justified or correspond with reality. Instead, for a theological non-realist, questions about the moral, emotional, and expressive value of the statements may be more important.

On the other hand, a metaphysical theological realist can also deny the importance of epistemic considerations for faith. Some fideists might advocate a view of this kind (Barthians, for example). Fideism, as Terence Penelhum puts it, is "the view that faith does not need the support of reason and should not seek it."²⁶ Accordingly, a fideist who embraces metaphysical theological realism may claim that the factual statements of religion are affirmed solely "by faith" or "on faith" and whether the statements seem more likely true than false from the epistemic point of view is wholly irrelevant and beside the point. This type of fideism, according to which faith is entirely isolated from epistemic considerations and entails an autonomous form of life, is widely rejected by analytic theists, though some restricted versions of fideism may find some support among them.²⁷

In summary, the questions analytic theists see as significant vis-à-vis faith presume certain characteristic views. As regards this study the crucial assumptions are linguistic theological realism and the view that faith is in some way connected with epistemic attitudes. Though these suppositions have been questioned by some philosophers, in this study they are taken for granted. After all, the questions of the study at hand arise from premises representative of analytic theists. It is not clear whether their problems are significant to philosophers of another background.

²⁴ See e.g. Plantinga 2000.

²⁵ See e.g. Pojman 2003.

²⁶ Penelhum 1995, 14.

²⁷ See e.g. Bishop 2007. On fideism, in general, see e.g. Amesbury 2012.

WILLIAM JAMES'S WILL TO BELIEVE

A well-known classic about the relationship between faith and will is the pragmatist William James's article "The Will to Believe", first published in 1896. James discusses this topic from the viewpoint of epistemic responsibilities, and hence the background of his discussion is the question of the relationship between faith and reason. As such James's view does not belong to the subjects of this study. But given the status of his article and that there has been interest in Jamesian themes among analytic theists, it is appropriate to offer a brief outline of James's claims here. The issues raised by his view may serve as a preface and stimulus for the later parts of this study.²⁸

James tries to argue that at times it is within persons' rights to "adopt a believing attitude in religious matters" even if their epistemic reasons for the attitude in question are inconclusive.²⁹ Here James is deliberately going against W. K. Clifford's famous evidentialist principle according to which "it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence".³⁰ Though James at first admits that Clifford's principle and views akin to it sound quite reasonable, he nonetheless maintains that they can be dismissed when certain specific conditions are fulfilled.³¹ In short, James's claim is that when a hypothesis presents itself to a person in "a genuine option", the person may, if she so wants, rightfully adopt the hypothesis despite its evidential inconclusiveness.

What is a genuine option? James labels a choice between two competing hypotheses as an option. According to him, an option is genuine if it is living, forced, and momentous. A living option, as opposed to a dead option, is one in which both hypotheses are live ones; both of them have some credibility or are in some way appealing. A forced option is one which is unavoidable: there is no possibility of not choosing some alternative. For example, accepting some truth or not accepting it is in James's view a forced option (withholding judgement appears to be equal to not accepting the truth). Lastly, an option is momentous, rather than trivial, if it is unique and irreversible and there is something significant at stake. James undoubtedly sees taking a stand on religious hypotheses momentous to some people, whereas a choice between scientific hypotheses seems for him to be trivial.³²

Suppose then that a choice between a religious hypothesis and, say, agnosticism is for me a genuine option. Which hypothesis should I in this case adopt? James argues that if the choice cannot be decided on intellectual grounds, my "passional" or "willing nature" not only legitimately may but must

²⁸ A remark about interpreting James is in order. According to Richard Gale, offering a coherent description of James's "will to believe" thesis is challenging after all he has said about the subject. (Gale 1999, 93. See also Bishop 2007, 112.) I am inclined to agree with Gale. Thus, the outline presented here will be just one superficial interpretation of James's view, and I do not seek to go very deeply into problematic details. My aim is here not so much to offer an all-inclusive description of James's view as to give a preamble to later discussion.

²⁹ James 1897, 1-2.

³⁰ Clifford 1879, 186.

³¹ James 1897, 8.

³² James 1897, 2-4.

decide which hypothesis to choose. By passional or willing nature James means humans' non-intellectual nature, which includes, as James's terms suggest, passional and volitional tendencies and predilections, among other things.³³ Consider a simple example: if from the desiderative viewpoint I find the religious hypothesis more attractive than the agnostic one, James holds that I should go with the religious hypothesis even if that is not intellectually warranted for me.

But if my intellectual grounds for the religious hypothesis are wanting, why should I allow my passional tendencies to choose it? Would it not be rational for me to withhold choice and thereby choose agnosticism? James does not think so. One of his reasons for this denial seems to be that by choosing the religious hypothesis I may, in fact, be putting myself in a better epistemic situation to assess the hypothesis's truth (I have to "test" its truth). So, I must go with the hypothesis, for otherwise, James says, relevant evidence might be forever withheld from me, and I might cut myself off forever from my "only opportunity of making the god's acquaintance".³⁴ James argues that if I do not choose the religious hypothesis, I am following a sceptical or agnostic rule according to which it is "*better risk loss of truth than chance of error*".³⁵ James holds, however, that "*a rule of thinking which would absolutely prevent me from acknowledging certain kinds of truth if those kinds of truth were really there, would be an irrational rule*".³⁶ Thus, since in James's view adopting the religious hypothesis can, in fact, lead me to discern the truth better, I should choose it. It is better to have a chance of error than to risk a loss of truth.

Suppose we grant to James all of his points. One might next ask what exactly does it mean to adopt a religious hypothesis, when it presents itself in a genuine option. It is here that the question of the relationship between faith ("adopting a religious hypothesis") and will comes up. According to one *prima facie* interpretation, by adopting the religious hypothesis James is encouraging, as the title of the article and some of James's wordings suggest, believing the religious hypothesis by the choice of the will.³⁷ That is, if my passional likings favour the religious hypothesis, I can simply decide to believe it at will.

In reality, it may be questioned whether the above is what James really means by adopting a religious hypothesis—he later felt that "The Right to Believe" would have been a better name for his article.³⁸ Still, James notices and discusses a problem that the general idea of believing at will involves: it seems that in many cases our will is incapable of producing beliefs. In its place, James holds, we are forced to believe what the intellect perceives as truth. To utilise James's own example, we cannot choose to believe at will that the sum of the two one-dollar bills in our pocket is equal to a hundred dollars, but our

³³ James 1897, 9, 11.

³⁴ James 1897, 28.

³⁵ James 1897, 26. James's italics.

³⁶ James 1897, 28. James's italics.

³⁷ See e.g. James 1897, 1, 6, 7, 29.

³⁸ See e.g. Miller 1942, 542.

intellect shows that the sum is two dollars, and this is what we consequently believe.³⁹

However, James argues that “our willing nature is unable to bring to life again” only already dead hypotheses, such as the sum of two one-dollar bills is equal to hundred dollars.⁴⁰ Things seem to be otherwise as regards live hypotheses or the hypotheses involved in genuine options in general. In this case our passional (willing, non-intellectual) nature can apparently do something that overrides the view that the will cannot cause belief and we only believe what the intellect dictates.⁴¹ It would be tempting to explicate James as saying that a person’s passional nature can in some way change the person’s non-believing state into a believing state as regards the relevant hypothesis. But this is a vague description, and in this respect James is actually opaque and ambiguous. It is not at all clear what he means by allowing our passional nature to choose a hypothesis in the situation of a genuine option. But it seems that some kind of choice is nonetheless made.

This much may suffice for an introduction to James’s view—and to the topics of this study, too. Though one further question could be what James means by belief, the central thing to recognise here is that preliminary considerations suggest that the idea of believing at will is strange, and this peculiarity has relevance to issues concerning the voluntariness of faith. As illustrated by James, the view that adopting a religious hypothesis is a matter of simply believing it at will is not without its problems. Later in this study we will review some theistic interpretations or, rather, reconstructions of James’s view. All of them take into account the peculiarity involved in the idea of believing at will and seek to address it in different ways. This is one way to approach the question of the relationship between faith and will: how should James’s view be understood?

³⁹ James 1897, 4-5, 7.

⁴⁰ James 1897, 8.

⁴¹ See James 1897, 9-11.

1 FAITH AND BELIEF IN ANALYTIC THEISM

In this chapter I shall firstly analyse analytic theists' general views on the nature of faith. The aim is primarily to offer a conceptual clarification and a framework for later parts of this study. Secondly, I will examine theistic philosophers' views on the nature of belief, since it has an important role in the discussion on faith and voluntariness thereof. One thing should be noted about the notion of belief from the outset. As William Alston says, the term "belief" is ambiguous: it may refer either to the psychological state of believing something, "believing that so-and-so", or to what is believed, the propositional content of the psychological state.⁴² In this study "belief" stands for the former: it is belief as one propositional attitude among others, that is, propositional belief. The latter use of belief is covered by the notion of proposition (for some further discussion see section 1.2.1.).

1.1 THE NATURE OF FAITH

1.1.1 VARIANTS OF THE NOTION OF FAITH

The concept of faith is extensive, and it is used in both religious and non-religious contexts. According to John Bishop, at its most general "faith" means much the same as "trust".⁴³ On the other hand, J. L. Schellenberg holds that "faith" is a rich, suggestive, and elusive term—it is, as he puts it, "multiply ambiguous".⁴⁴ Even if we focus merely on religious faith, it is tempting to agree with Alston's claim that because "faith" is a highly loaded positively evaluative term in religion, there is a tendency to attach it to whatever one thinks most central in a religious response to the divine.⁴⁵ But this just further obscures the concept. So, in order to avoid vagueness, I will in this section explicate some relevant meanings of the notion of faith.

Robert Audi has distinguished seven different faith-locutions which he thinks the discourse of everyday life contains. The locutions are:

- (1) *propositional faith*, indicated where someone is said to have faith *that* something is so;
- (2) *attitudinal faith*, designated where a person is said to have faith *in* some being (or other entity, such as an institution);
- (3) *creedal faith*, that is, a set of tenets designated by 'a religious faith', the kind of faith one belongs to by virtue of commitment to at least its central tenets;

⁴² Alston 1996a, 3. Cf. Lad Sessions 1994, 50; Schellenberg 2005, 40.

⁴³ See Bishop 2010.

⁴⁴ Schellenberg 2005, 107.

⁴⁵ Alston 1996a, 14-15.

- (4) *global faith*, the kind whose possession makes one a *person of faith* and can qualify one as religious provided that the content of the faith is appropriate;
- (5) *doxastic faith*, illustrated by believing something “on faith” (or, perhaps not quite equivalently, “in faith”), so we may conceive doxastic faith as one kind of propositional faith;
- (6) *acceptant faith*, referred to when someone is said to accept another person, or a claimed proposition or proposed action, ‘in good faith’ or, sometimes, ‘on faith’; and
- (7) *allegiant faith* (or *loyalty faith*), which is roughly fidelity, as exemplified by keeping faith with someone.⁴⁶

Locutions (1)-(4) are relevant here and so worth commenting on to some extent. Views similar to (5) and (6) will be discussed in sections 3.1. and 4.2. respectively. Locution (7), as Audi notes, is important for understanding religious commitment, which is a widely discussed topic in this study.⁴⁷

In locution (1) “faith” functions as a cognitive attitude akin to propositional belief. The intentional object of such faith is thus a proposition. In locution (2), on the other hand, the object of faith is characteristically a person, though there are other possibilities, too—an artefact or a group, for example.⁴⁸ The object of this kind of faith is actually imprecise: it can be either a thought of the object or the object itself. Audi seems to acknowledge this vagueness, as he contrasts the psychological use of “faith in” with its relational use.⁴⁹ Both propositional and attitudinal faith seems to involve some kind of favouring (rather than opposing) attitude towards their object.⁵⁰ In philosophical treatments “faith that” and “faith in” have been defined variously. Note that these attitudes need to be distinguished from their doxastic counterparts, namely, “belief that” and “belief in”.

Audi’s locution (3), credal faith, is in its meaning close to that of doctrine. Audi holds, for example, that to speak of the Roman Catholic credal faith is to speak of a body of doctrine, a set of propositions, which is supposedly distinctive of Roman Catholicism. Audi says that his credal faith is what Keith Yandell labels a religion.⁵¹ According to Yandell,

*a religion is a conceptual system that provides an interpretation of the world and the place of human beings in it, that rests on that interpretation an account of how life should be lived in that world, and that expresses this interpretation and lifestyle in a set of rituals, institutions and practices.*⁵²

Given the comparison, Audi apparently refers by “credal faith” to a broader set of propositions than those of a specific creed, such as the Nicene or the

⁴⁶ Audi 2011, 53-54.

⁴⁷ Audi 2011, 62. For Audi’s elucidation of the locutions, see Audi 2011, 54-62.

⁴⁸ Alston holds that “when one is said to have faith in a group, a social institution, or a movement, either these are being personified or we are thinking of a person or persons as being involved in them in some crucial way”. Alston 1996a, 12-13.

⁴⁹ Audi 2011, 56.

⁵⁰ Cf. Alston 1996a, 12-14. For example, Alston says that “if S were strongly opposed to universal democracy, it would be somewhere between inapt and false to represent S as having *faith* that democracy will triumph”. Alston 1996a, 12.

⁵¹ Audi 2011, 57, 57 n. 9.

⁵² Yandell 1990, 451. Yandell’s italics.

Athanasian Creed. Possibly the creedal faith of a given religion can be seen as that religion's worldview.⁵³

The scope of the Christian creedal faith would probably be broad and possibly indefinite for Audi. Traditionally, however, the propositional content of Christian faith has been conceived rather narrowly. For example, in the Thomist tradition, as Anthony Kenny describes it, the content of faith is certain propositions specially revealed by God through different mediums, say, Christ, the Bible, or the Church. The propositions concern God's nature and the acts he has done, and they are not ascertainable by mere use of natural reason.⁵⁴ According to this view, "the theistic proposition" that there is an omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect God is not, strictly speaking, part of the content of faith, since it was argued that God's existence can be known without special revelation by rational enquiry.⁵⁵

Alvin Plantinga also holds that the propositional content of Christian faith is not primarily that there is a God. Instead, in his view the content is the scheme of salvation God has arranged: "The content of faith is just the central teachings of the gospel; it is contained in the intersection of the great Christian creeds."⁵⁶ In this study we do not, in general, need to take any specific stance on the question of what is the propositional content of faith. It perhaps suffices to note that in theistic discussion the proposition that there is a God figures as a typical example of the content of faith. When referring to the content of faith we may speak variously of propositions of faith, faith-propositions, creedal propositions, doctrinal propositions, and the like.

In Audi's locution (4), that is, in global faith, Audi holds that the basic notion is that of being a person of faith or of having religious faith. He opposes this both to lacking any such faith and to having a particular religious faith, which implies adherence to specific doctrines or standards (cf. creedal faith). Audi argues that people with their own views of God can be persons of faith, though they do not belong to any faith in particular. Being a person of faith is in Audi's view a global notion, because it "represents an overall stance in matters that govern important aspects of human life."⁵⁷

I am not sure why having religious faith, in general, would in Audi's way have to be contrasted with having a particular religious faith. Does not having religious faith always amount to having some particular religious faith, though

⁵³ Compare Audi's notion to that of Swinburne: "I understand by a creed a theological system in a wide and vague sense, in which there are some central claims agreed by followers of the religion and other disputed less central claims. I am not using the term creed in the narrower sense of a collection of propositions to which a church member is required in some sense to assent." Swinburne 2005, 198.

⁵⁴ "The truths which it was alleged had been thus revealed were of various kinds: that Israel was God's chosen people, that there were three persons in one God, that the Eucharist was Christ's body and blood, that the Holy Spirit does not desert the elect, that the wicked would suffer forever in Hell." Kenny 1983, 69.

⁵⁵ Kenny 1983, 69-70, 74-75. Cf. Swinburne 2005, 138.

⁵⁶ Plantinga 2000, 248.

⁵⁷ Audi 2011, 57-58. It may be common to use "having faith in God", which Audi called attitudinal faith, as a synonym for "having Christian faith" or "being a person of Christian faith". See e.g. Moser 2010, 104-105; Swinburne 2005, 137. However, here "faith in" should be conceived more narrowly as one relevant attitude among others a person of faith may exemplify.

not necessarily an accredited one? For example, people with their unique views on religious matters seem to subscribe to the particular religious faith they have come up with. But be that as it may, here it is vital just to acknowledge that there is such a notion of faith that is instantiated by being a person of faith or by having religious faith. This is the concept of faith we are above all interested in in this study. In the next section I will elaborate theists' views on faith of this type.

1.1.2 ASPECTS OF FAITH

What does it take to be a person of faith? Or, equivalently, what does having faith presume? I suggest that this question can be answered by posing the requirements or traits a person must fulfil in order to count as a person of faith. We may refer to these requirements as *aspects of faith*.⁵⁸ An allegedly complete index of these aspects could then be characterised as a *model*, a *view*, or an *account* of faith (I will use these synonymously). Audi mentions that to have, or be of, a given creedal faith is mainly to hold specific tenets and attitudes.⁵⁹ This, however, is only a perfunctory description, and the theists have actually offered different accounts of faith. In this section I shall focus on analytic theists' general views on different aspects of faith.

Richard Swinburne holds that the most widespread and natural view of faith is the one according to which to have faith is, with a few correctives, simply to believe that God exists. "The person of religious faith," he says, "is the person who has the theoretical conviction that there is a God." Swinburne maintains that this view is found in Aquinas and in many Christians before him, and it has been espoused by many Protestants and many outside Christianity.⁶⁰ Generally speaking, Swinburne appears to be right on this point. The view that faith has to do with believing something to be the case, that is, that faith is doxastic, seems to be a widespread assumption. But it is not the only possibility, as will be shortly illustrated.

The doxastic nature of faith seems to be a widely shared supposition in analytic theistic philosophy, too. The following evaluations by writers from this tradition bear this point out.⁶¹ In Louis Pojman's view, most theologians and philosophers hold that Christian faith requires propositional belief,⁶² and Schellenberg similarly contends that most philosophers maintain that religious faith is either propositional belief or entails such belief.⁶³ What is more, as Audi notes, in philosophical discussion on the relationship between faith and reason there is a tendency to think that faith is belief-entailing.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ I suppose that one could also speak about, say, elements, constituents or components of faith. In my view aspects of faith is just a suitably neutral term to use.

⁵⁹ Audi 2011, 57.

⁶⁰ Swinburne 2005, 138.

⁶¹ See also Koistinen 2000, 20–21.

⁶² Pojman 2003, 536.

⁶³ Schellenberg 2005, 106.

⁶⁴ Audi 2011, 52.

Plantinga even argues that beliefs about God amount to knowledge according to his latest epistemological theory.⁶⁵

Since there seems to be a connection between faith and belief, one could argue that at least one aspect of faith amounts to believing certain propositions, namely, the propositions of the preferred creedal faith. However, this is an assumption that has been questioned in analytic theistic philosophy of religion. To be precise, it has been argued that belief is not the only viable propositional attitude a person of faith may take towards the relevant propositions. The attitudes that have been proposed as a substitute for belief are manifold. Alston, for example, suggests that acceptance is suitable for faith,⁶⁶ whereas Joshua Golding and Swinburne basically argue that assuming the truth of the relevant propositions is sufficient (Swinburne's view is actually more complex; see section 2.1.).⁶⁷ Then again, Richard Creel, James Muyskens, and Pojman argue that hope can take the place of belief,⁶⁸ while Audi, Daniel Howard-Snyder, and Schellenberg maintain that propositional faith can do that.⁶⁹ It is of importance to note that even though some philosophers utilise the same term for the attitude they deem suitable for faith, their definitions of the term may differ from each other remarkably.

One of the leading motives behind the above mentioned views seems to be the assessment that considering belief or, rather, convinced belief, "the theoretical conviction" in Swinburne's terms, as a necessary precondition for having faith is unrealistic and an unduly strong requirement. Instead, it is maintained that faith is also feasible with epistemically weaker propositional attitudes.⁷⁰ Pojman is a good example of this view. He argues that those who are religious doubters and find it hard to believe that there is a God may still hope that God exists, and this purportedly suffices for exemplifying one kind of view of faith.⁷¹

The above line of reasoning is not unique only to recent discussion among analytic theists. According to Timo Koistinen, a standard idea in the post-Kantian theology has been that having faith is compatible with philosophical agnosticism. As Koistinen notes, Kant himself held that faith does not require the belief that God exists but merely the belief that it is possible that God exists. This is one of Kant's postulates of practical reason, and it evidently fits together with agnosticism or with not having a convinced (firm, strong, flat-out) belief that God exists.⁷²

⁶⁵ See Plantinga 2000. For a similar claim, see Moser 2008.

⁶⁶ Alston 1996a. It should be stressed, as Audi notes, that the term "acceptance" can be used as an equivalent of "belief". Audi 2011, 61. However, in this study we will draw a sharp distinction between belief and acceptance. For discussion, see sections 3.1.2. and 4.2..

⁶⁷ Golding 1990; Swinburne 2005. Cf. Buckareff 2005.

⁶⁸ Creel 1993; Muyskens 1979; Pojman 2003. Cf. Knuuttila 1986.

⁶⁹ Audi 2011; Howard-Snyder 2013; Schellenberg 2005. In addition to the views mentioned here, Schellenberg lists the following authors arguing for faith without belief: Byrne 1998, 67-68; Lad Sessions 1994; Price 1969, 484-485; Tennant 1943, 78. See Schellenberg 2005, 129 n.1.

⁷⁰ See e.g. Alston 1996a, 16; Swinburne 2005, 228.

⁷¹ Pojman 2003, 543.

⁷² Koistinen 2000, 90-91, 91 n. 76. In Kant's view the "assertoric faith" merely needs "*the idea of God*": "The *minimum* of cognition (it is possible that there is a God) must, subjectively, already be

We can infer from the ongoing discussion that according to the theists it is not a narrowly strong belief but, more broadly, some affirmative propositional attitude that is taken to be indispensable for faith. We may name this as the *cognitive* aspect of faith, which then amounts to having some pro-attitude towards the truth of the propositional content of faith.⁷³ In theistic discussion there appears to be two diverging general approaches to the nature of this pro-attitude that is taken to be distinct from strong belief. First, one may argue that the attitude does not amount to, or consist of, belief of any type but is an attitude of a different kind. This means that the attitude in question is non-doxastic. Second, one may hold that the pro-attitude does involve belief, albeit one that is conviction-wise weaker than strong belief. In this case one may call the attitude in question sub-doxastic.⁷⁴ These are important distinctions to which I shall return in later parts of this study. For convenience's sake, I will in this section mostly speak about belief when referring to the cognitive aspect of faith, though it needs to be recognised that it is not the only offered alternative.

It may be worth emphasising that while some theistic philosophers are arguing for sub- or non-doxastic faith, none of them is suggesting a non-propositional version of it. According to one construal of the latter, religious language never expresses propositions but functions in a way that is, in Audi's words, "not semantically statemental in a sense of implying truth or falsity".⁷⁵ A non-propositionalist could argue, for example, that the sentence "God is good", which *prima facie* stands for a proposition, in fact expresses some sort of positive exclamation akin to, say, "hooray for life!". This type of non-propositionalism is best seen as a variant of theological non-realism (see the introduction). Contrary to this, philosophical theists universally endorse the propositional view of faith; they only differ on the point of what is a suitable attitude towards the relevant propositions.

So, analytic theists hold that faith includes some pro-attitude towards the truth of the propositional content of faith. But besides this cognitive aspect, an account of faith is typically taken to involve something more. Relating to this point, Plantinga says that suppose we ask whether one could have the appropriate religious beliefs and yet fail to have faith. In his view the traditional Christian answer is yes, since, as said in the book of James (2: 19), "the demons believe and they shudder",⁷⁶ and yet they do not have faith.⁷⁷ What, then, distinguishes a person of faith from a demon, if it is not beliefs?

sufficient [...]". *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, 154 n. 32. In addition, according to J. P. Day, Kant held that hoping is relevant here. The postulates of the practical reason are something one hopes for. See Day 1991, 39-42.

⁷³ Cf. Alston 1996a, 15; Bishop 2007, 104. See also Audi 2011, 57.

⁷⁴ I have borrowed the term "non-doxastic" from Audi and the term "sub-doxastic" from Bishop. See e.g. Audi 2011, 53; Bishop 2007, 110.

⁷⁵ Audi 1991, 225.

⁷⁶ As a whole James (2: 19) goes as follows: "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder."

⁷⁷ Plantinga 2000, 291. Plantinga, however, offers a suggestion according to which the devils might not, after all, have the relevant beliefs: "The content of faith is plausibly *indexical*: a person *x* has faith only if *x* believes or knows that God is benevolent toward *x herself*. But perhaps the devils do not believe

Plantinga holds that the difference between a believer and a demon lies, in traditional categories, in the orientation of the will. He maintains that the dissimilarity is not primarily in the executive function of the will (say, decision making), though it is involved, but in the affective function of the will (say, loving and hating). Plantinga argues that even though the demons believe, they hate what they believe and they also hate God. The person of faith, on the other hand, not only believes but finds what she believes attractive, is grateful to God for it, and loves God.⁷⁸ This sort of welcoming the propositional content of faith and being thankful to its sender we may label as the *evaluative-affective* aspect of faith.⁷⁹ This aspect can be seen as encompassing a wide variety of relevant favourable value judgments, sentiments, and emotions.⁸⁰

In some instances the evaluative-affective aspect of faith amounts to cherishing or esteeming the propositional content of faith (“the welcoming the content”). This type of attitude indicates, in general, the positive value of the relevant propositions. Such an attitude must be clearly distinguished from the pro-attitude involved in the cognitive aspect of faith, which is more concerned with affirming the truth of the propositions in some way, rather than their positive value. However, some propositional attitudes seem to cover both the cognitive and the evaluative-affective aspects of faith. At least at first glance, propositional faith and hope appear to be attitudes of this sort. Still, the general distinction between the cognitive and evaluative-affective should be clear enough.⁸¹

Moving to another point, it is not uncommon to claim that besides believing that there is a God, persons of faith also believe in God. Quite often “belief in x” is used merely as a synonym for “belief that x exists” in which case the first mentioned claim does not make much sense. Sometimes, however, “belief in” and “belief that” are taken to be substantially dissimilar attitudes. There may be different ways to elaborate the former notion as a distinct attitude from the latter, but H. H. Price’s and Schellenberg’s definition of it is especially applicable regarding the topic of the evaluative-affective aspect of faith.

that God is benevolent toward *them*. They know that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and perfectly good, and that he has arranged a way of salvation for human beings; but perhaps they reject the belief that God is benevolent toward them.” Plantinga 2000, 291 n. 1.

⁷⁸ Plantinga 2000, 244, 291-292.

⁷⁹ See Bishop 2007, 105. Cf. Alston 1996a, 15.

⁸⁰ Here is what Plantinga says in one connection: “Chief among these right affections is love of God—desire for God, desire to know him, to have a personal relationship with him, desire to achieve a certain kind of unity with him, as well as delight in him, relishing his beauty, greatness, holiness, and the like. There is also trust, approval, gratitude, intending to please, expecting good things, and much more.” Plantinga 2000, 292.

⁸¹ What may seem to obscure the distinction is that according to some theories value judgments and emotions involve propositional belief, which is a cognitive attitude. But even so there is an evident distinction between, say, believing that God has forgiven the sins of humankind and believing that this forgiveness is or would be a good or delightful thing. What may also seem to blur the distinction between the cognitive and the evaluative-affective aspect is that it is not rare to speak broadly of emotions or affections in connection with truth-related cognitive attitudes. For example, Creel interprets propositional faith as emotional confidence that a proposition is true. Creel 1993, 331 n. 4. See also section 1.2.. But while such attitudes as Creel’s propositional faith involve an emotional or affectional state, they nonetheless belong to the cognitive aspect of faith, since they primarily concern the truth of propositions, not their positive value.

Price distinguishes the factual sense of “belief in”, in which case it reduces to “belief that”, from its evaluative sense, where he thinks something like esteeming or trusting is essential.⁸² Schellenberg holds that “affective belief” is a better name for this latter attitude, and in his view it is primarily a matter of emotion. Thus, Schellenberg suggests that “S believes in x” is synonymous with the following conjunction: (1) S believes that x has value or is in some way a good thing, and (2) S is disposed, when x comes to mind, to experience a feeling state that, when conjoined with the fact represented by (1), produces a blended experience of approving, trusting, and loyal emotions towards x.⁸³

Price’s and Schellenberg’s notion of “belief in” can be conveniently applied to summarise Plantinga’s intended affectional difference between a person of faith and the demons: the person of faith not merely believes that there is a God, like the demons do, but she also believes in God, and this attitude is something the demons lack.⁸⁴ (Plantinga has actually made a similar point, but his usage of “belief in” is more imprecise than Price’s and Schellenberg’s.⁸⁵) It may be interesting to note that Price interprets the demons of the James Epistle as having factual belief in God but evaluative disbelief in him. That is, the demons believe that there is a God but neither esteem nor trust him.⁸⁶

Is there more to having faith than the cognitive and the evaluative-affective aspects? Plantinga mentions that besides these things, faith also involves the executive function of the will (see above). By this he means that persons of faith “commit themselves to the Lord, to conforming their lives to his will, to living lives of gratitude.”⁸⁷ (This is one thing that Plantinga appears to see involved in belief in God.⁸⁸) What is more, Plantinga says that “faith is initially and fundamentally practical; it is knowledge of the good news and of its application to me, and of what I must do to receive the benefits it proclaims”.⁸⁹ Even so, Plantinga immediately adds to this insight that “still, faith itself is a matter of belief rather than action; it is believing something rather than doing something”.⁹⁰

Bishop holds that in the view of faith Plantinga elaborates, putting one’s faith into practice by trusting one’s life to God and seeking to obey his will counts as “acting out” one’s faith rather than as part of faith itself.⁹¹ Plantinga

⁸² Price 1969, 435-437.

⁸³ Schellenberg 2005, 69. Schellenberg’s notion of “belief in” resembles certain theories of emotion. Consider, for example, Patricia Greenspan’s characterisation: “Let me propose, then, that we look at emotions as compounds of two elements: affective states of comfort or discomfort and evaluative propositions spelling out their intentional content.” Greenspan 1988, 4.

⁸⁴ In order for affective belief to count as a religious attitude, Schellenberg holds that one additional proviso is required: “At least part of S’s reason for valuing x is that S values the existence of an ultimate and salvific reality, or, more directly, the good obtainable in relation to such a reality, if it exists.” Schellenberg 2005, 86.

⁸⁵ See Plantinga 1983, 18; 2000, 293-294.

⁸⁶ Price 1969, 436-437. Cf. Helm 2000, 109.

⁸⁷ Plantinga 2000, 244.

⁸⁸ Plantinga 1983, 18.

⁸⁹ Plantinga 2000, 249.

⁹⁰ Plantinga 2000, 249.

⁹¹ Bishop 2010, ch. 3.

seems to have a tendency to conceive of faith in this way, but among theistic philosophers this view is somewhat unusual. In its place, it is rather common for analytic theists to argue that having faith involves some type of practical response, pursuit, or commitment as one of its central aspects; faith without works is taken to be dead, as James (2: 17) states.⁹²

An emphasis on practical commitment is, among other things, implied in Paul Helm's distinction between having "thin" and "thick" beliefs about God. Helm claims that for a thin believer her beliefs about God are merely theoretical in nature. Such a person may think that the beliefs she holds have cognitive importance—they may be, for example, worthy of continual enquiry. But even with this recognition, Helm holds, for a thin believer the beliefs she has carry no practical consequences, that is, they are practically indifferent.⁹³ In contrast, to a thick believer, Helm argues, God is one to whom it is comprehensible to make a "fiducial commitment". In his view, thick believing makes such responses as trust, obedience, and devotion intelligible. In short, Helm holds that thick belief introduces practical concerns,⁹⁴ and he obviously sees such believing as the proper attitude for a person of faith.⁹⁵

In reference to Helm's distinction, Bishop succinctly states that to those whom belief that God exists is "merely assent to a metaphysical hypothesis with no significance for how they live their lives, theistic belief is outside any context of faith".⁹⁶ In another connection Bishop notes that theoretically a person could have Christian beliefs, welcome their truth, and yet do nothing in consequence, because of some type of weakness of will, for example. Bishop maintains, however, that to be a person of Christian faith, one has to do something in virtue of one's faith beliefs, namely, "*commit* oneself to God—and that involves entrusting oneself to God and seeking to do God's will."⁹⁷ One might say that here, unlike in Plantinga's view, much weight is unambiguously given to the executive function of the will as a significant part of faith.

To take one further example, Paul Moser has reasoned in a way similar to that of Bishop, though he appears to put even more robust emphasis on the practical commitment faith involves. Moser argues that faith should be understood in terms of kardiathology, which is "theology aimed primarily at one's motivational heart, including one's will, rather than just at one's mind or one's emotions".⁹⁸ In Moser's view kardiathology should be conceived as "obedient entrustment of oneself to God" that is "inherently action-oriented". This view is then contrasted both with "intellectual approaches" that see faith

⁹² See e.g. Bishop 2007; Golding 1990; Helm 2000; Moser 2010; Pojman 2003; Swinburne 2005.

⁹³ Helm 2000, 107-108. See also Helm 2000, 105.

⁹⁴ Helm 2000, 106, 108.

⁹⁵ See e.g. Helm 2000, 110. Helm's distinction between thin and thick beliefs about God is wide-ranging. For further elucidation see Helm 2000, 103-111.

⁹⁶ Bishop 2007, 48.

⁹⁷ Bishop 2007, 105-106.

⁹⁸ Moser 2010, 25-26.

only as belief and with “subjectivist approaches” that fail to make faith action-oriented.⁹⁹

As a result, it is typical for analytic theists to hold that having faith entails a commitment to God or to the creedal faith one espouses by some sort of practical action—or perhaps it is more accurate to speak of a disposition to act. We may label this as the *practical* aspect of faith. There may be different interpretations as to what exactly is involved in this aspect, but the subsequent outline giving Swinburne’s views likely serves as an appropriate guide. To begin with, Swinburne notes that commitment to God is possible with good or evil purposes. A person may, as he says, “try to conquer the world, believing that God will help him in this task”.¹⁰⁰ But Swinburne holds that a saving faith cannot be exhibited by complete scoundrels, such as the would-be world conqueror. He thus claims that a person can have faith only if her purposes are good ones, like feeding the starving, worshipping God, and seeking an after-life for oneself or for others.¹⁰¹ Following these thoughts, one might suggest that seeking to do actions that are morally good in the light of the faith one advocates fits in with the practical aspect of faith.¹⁰²

Relating to the aspect of faith at hand, Yandell has made a distinction between “practical faith” and “personal faith”. He holds that the former amounts to practising religion, for example, by participating in rites and rituals and by confessing sins to God and asking for forgiveness. On the other hand, personal faith, according to Yandell’s definition, means to trust God: “One takes that Person to will good to oneself and others [...]. One worships God, not only as powerful, but as good. One confesses one’s sins and commits one’s life to God.”¹⁰³ Yandell’s motivation for his distinction seems to be the possibility that one can apparently have improper “empty faith”, that is, practical faith without personal faith.¹⁰⁴

I am not sure whether Yandell’s distinction is reasonable, though some division in that neighbourhood may be (social versus personal, perhaps; see also below). The problem is that given Yandell’s somewhat perfunctory definitions of practical and personal faith, I cannot see how they would differ from each other in any crucial way. There is surely the possibility of having a kind of empty faith, when one practises faith only outwardly, superficially, or formally. But this can be described as not fully executing the practical aspect of faith or, say, as instantiating the practical aspect but not the evaluative-affective aspect of faith. Either way, I do not see any reason to make a distinction between practical and personal faith. Both of them are covered by the practical aspect of faith as defined here.

⁹⁹ Moser 2010, 105.

¹⁰⁰ Swinburne 2005, 145.

¹⁰¹ Swinburne 2005, 145–146.

¹⁰² Swinburne seems to argue that having good purposes is an additional requirement for faith, and it is not entailed by what we named the practical aspect of faith. We may, however, think that the entailment holds. Cf. Helm 2000, 157.

¹⁰³ Yandell 1990, 460–461.

¹⁰⁴ Yandell 1990, 461.

As presented so far, exemplifying all of the introduced three aspects of faith would basically amount to holding certain valued propositions true and acting upon them. Someone might claim that this still omits something essential, namely, the interpersonal character of faith. For example, Moser argues that “the notion of ‘faith in God’ is not reducible to the idea of faith ‘that God exists’”.¹⁰⁵ By this he means that having faith actually relates one to God, not just to a judgment or a proposition about God. Moser notes that writers influenced by Kierkegaard would say that faith involves a distinctive “I-Thou” relationship between a human and God.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, one might hold that faith involves having a personal relationship with God. We may label this the *interpersonal* aspect of faith (which is not to be confused with Yandell’s personal faith).

The central question with respect to the interpersonal aspect of faith is what does having a personal relationship with God actually mean. Moser appears to think that one important aspect of this relationship is a peculiar type of ongoing experiential acquaintance with God.¹⁰⁷ While the nature of such acquaintance would obviously require closer analysis, one may nonetheless ask a few things about it from the outset. First, why would any sort of experience of God be a necessary aspect of faith? Is it not instead the goal of faith (cf. *visio beatifica*)? Additionally, Alston, for example, thinks that the experiential awareness of God is a rare phenomenon, and Plantinga holds that perception of God is a part of mature Christian life, but such maturity in Christian life is not attained by most people.¹⁰⁸

Secondly, one might ask whether a condition for an assumed personal relationship with God is experiential acquaintance with God. Moser seems to think so, but Kevin Kinghorn, for example, appears to think otherwise. According to Kinghorn, a person enters into a relationship with God when she has faith in God under the following description:

Person S has faith in person G inasmuch as S, in response to G’s invitational statement(s) to S, accepts G’s authority in the areas to which this statement(s) indicates that G’s authority extends.¹⁰⁹

As examples of invitational statements Kinghorn mentions commands, promises, and assertions, and he notes that God can issue such statements both directly, that is, “in person”, and indirectly through different channels, say, a preacher or Scripture.¹¹⁰

Suppose then that a person receives God’s invitational statements by indirect means and accepts God’s authority in the required way. In this case, according to Kinghorn’s description, the person has a relationship with God, and yet she is not necessarily experientially acquainted with God. Perhaps as a rough analogy one could offer an athlete who is trained by her coach via email

¹⁰⁵ Moser 2010, 92.

¹⁰⁶ Moser 2010, 92-93, 104-105. With respect to this point, Moser refers to Buber 1923; Brunner 1964; Farmer 1942 ch. 2; Kierkegaard 1992; Moser 2008, ch. 3.

¹⁰⁷ See e.g. Moser 2008, 65; 2010, 91.

¹⁰⁸ Alston 1991, 36; Plantinga 2000, 289.

¹⁰⁹ Kinghorn 2005, 51-52.

¹¹⁰ See Kinghorn 2005, 52-59.

correspondence only. In this case it is natural to think that even if the athlete and the coach have never met in person, they are in a personal relationship with each other (“the athlete accepts her coach’s authority in the areas to which his training plan indicates his authority extends”).

Thus, it may be that a vital feature of personal relationships is not so much experiential acquaintance but, as Kinghorn puts it, “mutual recognition of, and response to, the agency of the other person”.¹¹¹ It is relevant to note that Kinghorn seems to hold that the response to the other person, the “accepting G’s authority”, is in essence a sort of commitment to the other person that manifests itself in practical action. A similar point applies to Moser’s view, too (see his notion of kardiathology above).¹¹² In this way Kinghorn’s and Moser’s accounts of what a personal relationship amounts to resemble the commitment we have taken the practical aspect of faith to involve.

Given the stated similarity between the practical and the interpersonal aspects, one might ask whether it is possible to have the former without the latter. Kinghorn seems to think that something like this is possible. His idea, to put it simply, appears to be something like the following: there is a difference between responding merely to the statements given by God, on the one hand, and responding to the giver of these statements, namely, to God as a personal agent, on the other.¹¹³ The former would in our terms amount to executing merely the practical aspect of faith, while the latter would amount to instantiating the interpersonal aspect of faith.

We may illustrate this point with our previous mundane example. There seems to be a difference between the following scenarios: the athlete executes her coach’s training plan only because the plan as such seems to be workable; the athlete executes the plan because it was given to her by the coach whom she recognises as an authority on this specific subject. Unlike in the latter case, in the former it is not so important where or from whom the training plan is received, and so one might propose that the former does not constitute a personal relationship.¹¹⁴

To note one further thing about the interpersonal aspect of faith, in Helm’s view some proponents of “the personalist view” argue that because faith is a personal relationship, it is not propositional at all.¹¹⁵ A defender of such a view may claim, for example, that the interpersonal character of faith would only be distorted if it were expressed in propositional form.¹¹⁶ Helm is critical towards such views. He maintains that even if the object of faith is a matter of direct acquaintance, it does not follow that propositions could not represent different aspects of this experience. Helm claims that faith is “always exercised in

¹¹¹ Kinghorn 2005, 52. In a similar fashion, William Lad Sessions argues that a personal relationship, which faith in his view is, is “a relationship between two distinct existing persons qua persons; it requires at least minimal mutual understanding by each person of his or her own and the other person’s character and intentions and also an understanding of the nature of their relationship”. Lad Sessions 1993, 76.

¹¹² See Kinghorn 2005, 59–62.

¹¹³ Kinghorn 2005, 57–59.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Kinghorn 2005, 57–58.

¹¹⁵ Helm 2000, 3–4, 6.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Helm 2000, 4.

respect of some belief or beliefs about the one in whom the faith is exercised”.¹¹⁷ Helm’s critique illustrates the weight theists give to the propositional nature of faith.¹¹⁸

1.1.3 CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

As a result, my suggestion is that four broad and interrelated aspects of faith can be distinguished within theistic discussion on what is an adequate model (view, account) of faith, or, in other words, on what being a person of faith entails. The aspects could be summarised as follows:

- (i) *the cognitive aspect*: having some affirmative propositional attitude towards the truth of the propositional content of faith;
- (ii) *the evaluative-affective aspect*: positively evaluating the content of faith and having appropriate emotional and reverential attitudes towards God;
- (iii) *the practical aspect*: commitment to God and to the creedal faith one embraces by appropriate practical action or, rather, action disposition;
- (iv) *the interpersonal aspect*: having a personal relationship with God.

We should note that not all of these aspects have received equal attention in theistic discussion. Neither have they always been distinguished from each other in the way done here. As we shall see, there is also some controversy about which aspects are indispensable for an adequate account of faith. Here it perhaps suffices to say that in addition to some cognitive attitude, which has been seen as a *sine qua non* for faith, some kind of commitment is often accentuated, whereas the interpersonal aspect has deserved less, if any, consideration in this context (as this study demonstrates). But there are exceptions to this general tendency, and sometimes these issues may be just a question of varying emphases or definitions. One might also note that it seems that the analytic theists have not really paid attention to possible social, communal or institutional aspects of faith. This may be a deficiency.¹¹⁹

We might here speculate whether each of the presented aspects of faith could alone function as a realisable model of faith. With respect to (i), having

¹¹⁷ Helm 2000, 5-7.

¹¹⁸ Helm does not actually specify who argues for a personalist and non-propositional account of faith but just refers to Lad Sessions’ work concerning the personalist view. See Helm 2000, 3; Lad Sessions 1994, 26-49. It is noteworthy, however, that Lad Sessions does not claim that the personalist view implies a non-propositional view of faith. Instead, he is critical towards such views, and his critique is similar to that of Helm: “Accounts of faith as lacking propositional belief must either devise some nonpropositional account of cognition or else give up cognitivism for faith altogether. Neither alternative seems very attractive—at any rate neither is attractive on the personal relationship model. Concerning the former, nonpropositional knowledge or cognition may be (essentially) involved in personal relationship, but this cannot be all that is involved. Even the best of friends or lovers needs to hold some view as to the truth of certain important propositions about the other’s character, beliefs, intentions, and desires (“he is trustworthy,” “she loves me”). Concerning the latter, without the cognitivism entrained by propositional belief, we could not talk about good or bad personal relationships in ways that seem essential, as, for example, delusive or defective [...]. No doubt it is vital that personal relationships can be good or bad in ways that do not involve (believing) propositions, but this is no reason to extirpate propositional cognitivism from faith altogether.” Lad Sessions 1994, 35-36.

¹¹⁹ See, however, Audi 2011, 97-99.

merely some affirmative propositional attitude towards the preferred creedal faith seems to be a coherent view. But, as we have seen, as such it is at least in analytic theistic philosophy taken to be an unsatisfactory account of faith. As to (ii), having only evaluative-affective attitudes relevant to the preferred faith also looks like a feasible stance, at least partially. It seems possible for a person to think, for example, that God's existence would be a good thing while she lacks a view on the truth of the matter. Then again, by the looks of it, it is questionable whether one could, say, emotionally love God while not holding any view on God's existence. Presumably the evaluative-affective aspect is not by itself a sufficient model of faith, but when understood more broadly, it is not unprecedented to argue that having faith is primarily a matter of emotion of some sort. For example, Friedrich Schleiermacher, who was influenced by the Romantic Movement, in his most famous statement defined religion as a feeling of absolute dependence.¹²⁰

Regarding (iii), at least from the theistic perspective it seems that it cannot function as a viable model of faith without (i): engaging in religious activities without any suitable cognitive aspect would amount to a case of make-believe. This can, however, illustrate a type of truth-indifferent account of faith, which is actually not far from Robin Le Poidevin's non-realist construal of faith.¹²¹ Le Poidevin holds that "to engage in religious practice [...] is to engage in a game of make-believe", and the point of such engagement is to arouse certain valuable emotions that can have an impact on one's life.¹²² Alternatively, having (iii) without (i) can be understood in a stricter sense as performing religious actions without any cognition. This, however, does not seem to be a comprehensible idea. Would not action without any cognitive aspect be just blind, unstructured motion? But this is not to say that the aim of some religious actions, say, meditation, could not be emptying one's mind from thoughts altogether.

Lastly, whether (iv) alone could function as an account of faith obviously depends on what is meant by having a relationship with God. I will here consider only one possibility. Suppose that having a personal relationship with God involves experiential acquaintance with God. In this case one might argue that the encounter with the divine reality is a completely ineffable experience, and thus it cannot be expressed in a propositional form. On the face of it, this model of faith would then not involve any cognitive aspect. But this may not be very convincing. Even if one's putative acquaintance with the divine reality is for the most part indescribable, one needs to have some assumptions about the nature of the experience, say, that it is of a religious character and that it is, say, probably truthful. And this just means that some sort of broadly cognitive aspect is required. So, it is hard to see how (iv) could function as a model of faith without (i) (see also Helm's critique against non-propositional personalist views above).

¹²⁰ See e.g. Forster 2002, ch. 10.

¹²¹ See Le Poidevin 1996, ch. 8.

¹²² Le Poidevin 1996, 118-119.

Bishop has proposed that there are three key aspects that may feature in models of faith: the cognitive, the affective, and the volitional.¹²³ My list is a bit different. Additionally, in my view it is more appropriate to think of Bishop's volitional aspect not as an aspect of faith but as a feature that may in a certain way attach to some or all of the four introduced aspects of faith. This will, in fact, be my viewpoint on the topic of the voluntariness of faith in the present study. Some of the introduced aspects may already look like suitable candidates for voluntary control. For example, it seems natural to think that practical actions are chosen at will, and thus it might be proposed that at least exemplifying the practical aspect of faith is voluntary. But even this requires further analysis.

1.2 THE NATURE OF BELIEF

As we saw in the previous section, it is a widely held view in analytic theistic philosophy that having faith involves having beliefs or, more accurately, that the cognitive aspect of faith consists of propositional belief. While we saw that this view has been questioned by some theistic philosophers, the assumption nonetheless often serves as a starting point for the discussion on faith and voluntariness thereof. It is thus significant to analyse theistic philosophers' understanding of the notion of belief. In what follows, I will start with briefly explicating the customary view of the structure of belief or propositional attitudes, in general. Subsequently, I will describe theists' views on what Pojman calls "the phenomenology of belief", which, as the name suggests, concerns the phenomenal features of belief.¹²⁴

1.2.1 THE STRUCTURE OF BELIEF

Propositional attitudes like "believe that", "know that", and "hope that" are normally taken to express a relation between a person and the content or the object of the attitude, a proposition.¹²⁵ When I believe that it rains, the person is me who has the relation of belief to the proposition that it rains. There are varying views on the ontological status of propositional attitudes and especially propositions, but from the folk psychological viewpoint, at least, propositional attitudes are mental entities whose existence depends on individual minds. It is also tempting to think, as Plantinga says, that propositions are ontologically dependent on mental activity in the way that "either they just are thoughts, or else at any rate couldn't exist if not thought of".¹²⁶ Then again, Frege, for example, appears to hold that propositions, while being graspable by thinking, are some type of abstract entities with a mind-

¹²³ See Bishop 2010.

¹²⁴ Pojman 2001, 138-141.

¹²⁵ See e.g. Swinburne 2001b, 32.

¹²⁶ Plantinga 2007, 211.

independent mode of being.¹²⁷ We do not need to settle this Platonist debate but may consider propositions simply as something that can be the objects of propositional attitudes. In addition, they are, as William Lad Sessions puts it, “whatever can have a truth-value of true or false”.¹²⁸

In formal notation “S believes that p” can be put as follows:

(a) B_{sp} .

Negation of belief can amount to two things. For what is denied can be either the belief-attitude or the proposition in question. Thus “S does not believe that p” and “S believes that not-p” respectively:

(b) $\neg B_{sp}$,

(c) $B_{s\neg p}$.

We may call (b) non-belief that p and (c) disbelief that p. So, to disbelieve that p is equal to believing that not-p. Both (b) and (c) are incompatible with (a). (b) is weaker than (c) in the sense that from (c) follows (b), but not necessarily the other way around. Indeed, (b) is compatible with the person being agnostic towards p. Thus, “S does not believe that p and S does not believe that not-p”:

(d) $\neg B_{ap} \wedge \neg B_{a\neg p}$.

(d) is incompatible with (a) and (c). It is perhaps appropriate to note that agnosticism towards a given proposition need not amount to ignorance but can be a reflected intellectual stance.¹²⁹

One might here also mention the well-known *de dicto/de re* distinction with respect to beliefs and belief-ascriptions (that is, reports of beliefs such as (a)-(f)). Consider Quine’s famous example as an illustration. He notes that “Ralph believes that someone is a spy” is ambiguous between

(e) Ralph believes that there are spies,

(f) there is someone whom Ralph believes to be a spy.

In formal notation respectively:

(e’) $B_{\text{Ralph}} \exists x \text{ Spy}(x)$,

(f’) $\exists x B_{\text{Ralph}} \text{ Spy}(x)$.

In this case (e) would be construed as *de dicto* and (f) as *de re*.

What is the difference between (e) and (f)? While Quine was ultimately critical towards the distinction, he notes that, on the face of it, the difference is vast: if Ralph is like most of us, (e) is true and (f) false.¹³⁰ Something along these lines is likely true. For example, I do believe that there are spies, but it is not the case that there is a certain person whom I believe to be a spy. What is more, the formal notation expresses a syntactical difference between (e’) and

¹²⁷ See Frege 1892; 1956. In this case the way thinking can grasp a proposition needs further elucidation. So, perhaps in thinking one actualises a mental token of the mind-independent proposition. Then again, perhaps in thinking one grasps the mind-independent proposition *per se*. This would presumably make it possible for persons to think about the numerically same proposition at the same time. I surmise Frege opted for the latter view. See e.g. Frege 1956, 307-308.

¹²⁸ Lad Sessions notes that a proposition is distinct from a statement, which “is the linguistic expression of a proposition, inscribed (or uttered, or whatever) in some particular ‘sentence’”. Lad Sessions 1994, 52. Cf. Swinburne 1994, 97-99. For our needs such further distinctions are not required, though they are otherwise important. For discussion on propositional attitudes and propositions, see e.g. McGrath 2012; McKay and Nelson 2010; Richard 1990.

¹²⁹ A classic of epistemic logic is Hintikka 1962.

¹³⁰ Cf. Quine 1956, 178.

(f'). In (e') the scope of the quantifier is narrower, within the scope of belief. In (f') the scope is broader, and it binds the variable that occurs within the scope of belief. There is thus a motivation for the distinction between *de dicto* and *de re* at least with respect to belief-ascriptions.¹³¹

As we are in this study interested in the phenomenology of belief, one might ask whether there is from a believer's first-person perspective any substantial difference between having a *de dicto* and a *de re* belief. That is, are *de dicto* and *de re* beliefs qualitatively different kinds of beliefs? According to one possible analysis, the answer is no. For one could argue that both *de dicto* and *de re* beliefs are propositional beliefs and the alleged dissimilarity is only a matter of difference in the propositional contents of the beliefs. This might mean, for example, that whereas in (e) the proposition Ralph believes is that there are spies, in (f), when adequately explicated, the proposition can be seen as being something like that some definite person is a spy.¹³²

Then again, the actual meanings of *de dicto* and *de re* indicate one answer regarding the difference between respective beliefs. According to Justin Broackes, for example, the "orthodox distinction" can be put as follows: "belief *de dicto* is belief that a certain *dictum* (or proposition) is true, whereas belief *de re* is belief about a particular *res* (or thing) that it has a certain property".¹³³ In view of that, one might propose that the qualitative difference between having *de dicto* and *de re* belief lies in their intentional objects. In *de dicto* belief the object of belief is a proposition; in *de re* belief the object is a non-propositional thing. This line of argument points to the conclusion that, unlike *de dicto* beliefs, *de re* beliefs are not propositional beliefs.

Taken at face value, the intentional object of *de re* belief is the real thing itself of which something is believed (cf. the quantifier's place in (f')). But this cannot mean that when a person has a *de re* belief, say, of the moon having craters, it is literally the concrete moon that the person beholds in the interior of his mind. This would be an absurd claim. Instead, it is more appropriate to hold that in many cases, at any rate, the intentional object of *de re* belief is some kind of mind-dependent entity, say, an idea, thought, representation, or a perception of the real object. In this case typical *de re* belief would involve an allegedly non-propositional idea of a thing *x* (the moon) as having a certain property *F* (craters).

In the above case, however, one might wonder whether there is beyond linguistic constructions any crucial difference between *de dicto* belief that *x* is *F* and *de re* belief of *x* that it is *F*. To me it looks like the latter naturally reduces to the former, in which case the difference between *de dicto* and *de re* beliefs would not be a matter of having dissimilar intentional objects. The distinction between *de dicto* and *de re* beliefs is not pivotal in this study. I shall simply speak about propositional beliefs and propositional attitudes. Still, the distinction is not entirely irrelevant either, as we will return to some extent

¹³¹ See McKay and Nelson 2010.

¹³² Cf. Broackes 1986, 377.

¹³³ Broackes 1986, 374.

similar considerations in the next section where Schellenberg's view on belief and its object will be analysed.

1.2.2 THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF BELIEF

Pojman describes the discussion on belief in British philosophy in the early part of the twentieth century as a dispute between occurrent and dispositional or behavioural analysis of belief. Occurrentism emphasises belief as nothing more than a kind of conscious mental state, whereas extreme Behaviourism tends to equal belief with a mere disposition to act in a certain way. In Pojman's view it was H. H. Price who eventually brought moderation into the debate. According to Price's mature view, belief is a disposition which has occurrent properties, too.¹³⁴ This is, in essence, the view of belief that is espoused in contemporary analytic theistic philosophy. Before venturing further, two things should be noted. First, the concept of belief to be analysed here covers both "mere belief" and knowledge.¹³⁵ Second, theistic philosophers commonly hold that the key method to survey the phenomenal features of belief is by reflection on our inner mental states.¹³⁶ This seems reasonable at least from folk psychological viewpoint: it does look as if we have a kind of privileged access to our mental states, beliefs included.¹³⁷

Pojman claims that a central question for Occurrentism is what happens to our beliefs when we do not think about them. Taken literally, the theory implies that when we cease to reflect a belief, we lose it.¹³⁸ But this looks like a dubious assertion. To me it seems that I have held many beliefs for years, and it is not the case that I have been thinking about them all the time. Consequently, Swinburne, for example, holds that beliefs undoubtedly persist while the believer is unaware of them, and hence they are what he calls "continuing mental states".¹³⁹ Similarly, Alston maintains that "it is clear that

¹³⁴ Pojman 1986a, 92-96. See Price 1969.

¹³⁵ Cf. Alston 1996a, 7.

¹³⁶ See e.g. Kinghorn 2005, 20; Schellenberg 2005, 41; Swinburne 2001b, 38.

¹³⁷ This does not imply, however, that we always perfectly realise what our actual beliefs are. For example, unwanted beliefs along with, say, inconvenient desires can presumably be repressed in some way. For discussion on a related topic of self-deception, see section 3.2..

¹³⁸ Pojman 1986a, 93. The problems that extreme behaviourism generate seem to be even more difficult. For example, Pojman lists the following issues it gives rise to. First, the account seems counterintuitive: we do seem to be immediately aware of our beliefs without having to consult our actions first. Secondly, given behaviourism, the notion of weakness of will would not make any sense: one could not, for example, believe that she should exercise while slacking off, since the belief would be discounted by one's behaviour. Thirdly, according to the behavioural view, it would be impossible to hold contradictory beliefs: actions cannot be contradictory; one cannot do and not do the same act at the same time. (Then again, one may query whether it is possible consciously to hold contradictory beliefs, as Pojman seems to presume.) Fourthly, behavioural analysis pays no attention to intentions, but an account of action seems incomplete without them: any behaviour is compatible with multiple intentions (or beliefs, in this case). For example, merely observing my behaviour does not tell whether by eating vegetables I believe that I am nourished or I believe that I am preventing the apocalypse. Pojman concludes that "strong dispositionalism" (that is, behaviourism) seems to be an overreaction to an exaggerated occurrentism and "there seems no good reason to deny that we have access to our belief states directly through introspection". Pojman 1986a, 95-96.

¹³⁹ Swinburne 2001b, 38.

belief is something one can have in a *latent* as well as in an *active* state". In Alston's view a disposition of a suitable sort satisfies this constraint.¹⁴⁰

What kind of disposition is belief? Alston argues that we can answer this question by thinking of various outcomes that would be expected if a subject S believes that p. Alston offers the following, in his view, partial list:

- (1) If B_sp, then if someone asks S whether p, S will have a tendency to respond in the affirmative.
- (2) If B_sp, then if S considers whether p, S will tend to feel it to be the case that p with some degree of confidence.
- (3) If B_sp, then S will tend to believe propositions that she/he takes to follow from p.
- (4) If B_sp, then S will tend to use p as a premise in theoretical and practical reasoning where this is appropriate.
- (5) If B_sp, then if S learns that not-p, S will tend to be surprised.
- (6) If B_sp, then S will tend to act in certain ways that would be appropriate if it were the case that p, given S's goals, aversions and other beliefs.

Alston notes that in each case S's belief is only a tendency to a certain manifestation, since what eventuates is also influenced by other psychological states and attitudes of S.¹⁴¹ Consider (1), for example: Bob may believe that there is ice cream in the fridge, but when Jill asks whether there is ice cream, Bob will respond in the negative because he desires to have it solely for himself.

Some of the conditions in Alston's list may seem more relevant to belief than others; some of them may just typically accompany belief without being features of it. For, to utilise Schellenberg's line of argument, if each condition of Alston's list were part of belief, belief could not occur without each of them. But, on the face of it, this seems quite implausible.¹⁴² Which of Alston's conditions, then, are central to belief? In theistic philosophy the emphasis has been put especially on (2) or something close to it. The way Alston phrases the condition conveys several features that need closer scrutiny. We may start with his claim that belief that p includes a feeling, namely, a feeling of confidence that p is the case.

To argue that belief involves a feeling is not peculiar to Alston alone. For example, Hume held a similar view, and Swinburne appears to have some

¹⁴⁰ Alston 1996a, 4. One might note here a special case having to do with belief as a latent disposition. There are numerous propositions we have never thought about. Suppose a person S, like presumably most of us, have never thought of the proposition that cats are not insects. What is S's belief-attitude towards this proposition? Should we say that S is agnostic towards it (in the sense of (d)), because S has never entertained the proposition in his mind? This seems somewhat implausible. For were S to pay attention to the proposition, it seems natural to think that S would claim to believe it rather than non- or disbelieve it. Maybe we should then say that S latently or implicitly believes that cats are not insects. Cf. Pojman 1986a, 155. Audi, however, is not satisfied with this proposal. According to him, we would in this case have to attribute to us far more beliefs than we actually have. Audi claims that what may seem to be antecedently held, unarticulated dispositional belief is really something quite different, namely, a disposition to believe. Audi 1994, 419. So, regarding S's case, in Audi's view it is not correct to say that S latently or dispositionally believes that cats are not insects, but that S only has a disposition to believe it. Then again, after S has carefully thought about the proposition's truth, she may perhaps begin to believe it dispositionally.

¹⁴¹ Alston 1996a, 4. Cf. Alston 2007, 130-131; Audi 1972, 43-62.

¹⁴² Cf. Schellenberg 2005, 60. See also Cohen 1992, 8-11.

sympathy towards Hume's account.¹⁴³ Pojman plainly claims that belief is "a feeling of conviction about *p*".¹⁴⁴ In a somewhat similar manner Plantinga maintains that a proposition believed "has a certain felt attractiveness about it" and that it "has about it a sense of rightness, or fittingness, or appropriateness [...]".¹⁴⁵ This is what Plantinga calls a "doxastic experience", and it is something propositions not believed in his view lack.¹⁴⁶ Plantinga maintains that this phenomenology is hard to describe, but familiar to us all.¹⁴⁷ It is perhaps worth noting that taking belief to involve a feeling is not restricted to theistic philosophers, but the view has supporters in analytic philosophy, on the whole.¹⁴⁸

While the view has been espoused by many, Audi and Schellenberg, for example, have expressed their doubts about the claim that belief necessarily includes a feeling. Schellenberg's view will be surveyed later in this section.¹⁴⁹ As regards Audi, he explicitly says of Alston's condition (2) that though it perhaps normally holds, it is not clear whether it has to hold. Audi notes that much depends on what "feel that *p*" is taken to involve.¹⁵⁰ Alston argues that by "feel" he is not implying some type of emotional state or sensation. Instead, in his view the term is broad enough "to range over a great variety of inner experiential states".¹⁵¹ He holds that what he calls the "feel that *p* is the case" is in the philosophical literature often termed as "consciously believing that *p*" or "occurrently believing that *p*".¹⁵²

If "feel" is elaborated in Alston's wide and elusive way, one perhaps cannot but agree with him that belief involves some sort of "feeling" (we will return to Alston's view in the next section). But if we understand "feel" as some type of vivid emotional or affectional state, Audi's tentative doubts may be advised. Someone might deny having any feelings of this kind attached to her beliefs even after careful reflection, but surely such a person would nonetheless have beliefs. What is more, the claim that belief involves, say, a palpable feeling of conviction or a sense of rightness, as if this were a universal psychological fact, requires empirical research to support its truth. But one may query whether such research has been conducted. In the end, however, one should probably not read too much into "feel" in this connection. Besides, there may be something else instead of feeling that is more central to belief. This leads us to a second remark on Alston's condition (2).

¹⁴³ Swinburne 2001b, 39-40. See Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Appendix. See also Pojman 1986a, 59-64.

¹⁴⁴ Pojman 2001, 137.

¹⁴⁵ Plantinga 1993a, 190.

¹⁴⁶ Plantinga 2000, 183.

¹⁴⁷ Plantinga 1993a, 191.

¹⁴⁸ This is illustrated, for example, by Raul Hakli's comment on the debate concerning the distinction between belief and acceptance: "In the contexts where the distinction has been made, beliefs have been characterized in various ways, but often a belief that *p* is taken to involve thinking that *p* is true, having a feeling that *p* is true, or having a disposition to feel that *p* is true." Hakli 2006, 288.

¹⁴⁹ See Schellenberg 2005, 50-59.

¹⁵⁰ Audi 2007, 242-243.

¹⁵¹ Alston 1996a, 5.

¹⁵² Alston 1996a, 241 n. 5. Cf. Pojman 1986a, 152; Price 1969, 288-289.

The second point in (2) that needs to be accentuated is the “to be the case that p” part of the phrase, that is, beliefs are concerned with the way things are in reality. In a similar way, Swinburne maintains that “a person’s beliefs are his or her ‘view’ of the world, what they ‘hold’ to be true about it [...]”.¹⁵³ Correspondingly, Bishop argues that “to believe that p is, I shall say, to *hold* that the proposition p is true [...]”.¹⁵⁴ The view at issue could be expressed in the well-known slogan “belief aims at truth”, which is often associated with Bernard Williams.¹⁵⁵ In isolation this catchphrase may be ambiguous, but we may think of it as conveying, in Pascal Engel’s terms, the “truism that to believe something is to believe that it is true [...]”.¹⁵⁶ That belief aims at truth distinguishes it from such truth-indifferent attitudes as imagining and supposing.¹⁵⁷

Truth-directedness in the sense just discussed may be a candidate for a central property of belief. For suppose that someone were to deny that believing that p is to hold p true. It seems that such a person would eventually have to admit that it is coherent to assert “I believe that p, but p is not true”. But the coherence of such a statement is not obvious. As Engel notes, Moore’s paradox reminds us that it is *prima facie* queer to say “I believe that p, but p is false”.¹⁵⁸ In line with this consideration, Roy Edgely holds that from the first-person perspective the answers one gives to “Do I believe that p?” and “Is it the case that p?” are indistinguishable.¹⁵⁹ This, as Andrei Buckareff aptly notes, echoes Wittgenstein’s comment on Moore’s paradox: “If there were a verb meaning ‘to believe falsely’, it would not have any significant first person indicative.”¹⁶⁰ So, given that the opposing view is, as one might say, logically odd, it does seem that belief aims at truth. From the first person point of view to believe is “to believe truly”. This does not mean that a proposition S believes could not be false, but only that if S believes it, S holds that it is true.

We have said that to believe that p is to believe or hold that p is true. However, Alston argues that it is a mistake to deploy the concept of truth in connection with belief. In his view, one can have beliefs without possessing this concept at all. Because of this Alston prefers to speak of “to be the case

¹⁵³ Swinburne 2001b, 32.

¹⁵⁴ Bishop 2007, 29-30. Cf. Lad Sessions 1994, 52.

¹⁵⁵ See Williams 1973.

¹⁵⁶ Engel 2004, 77. In the article Engel distinguishes and discusses three different interpretations of truth-directedness of belief: causal, normative, and intentional. The causal account amounts to the “truism” mentioned above. The normative view means that we ought to believe true propositions. The intentional interpretation is equal to respecting and maintaining the normative view. See Engel 2004 78-79, 81, 84.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Buckareff 2005, 438.

¹⁵⁸ Engel 2004, 79. What is wrong with Moorean sentences? One way to explain the oddity in the Moorean “I believe that p but it is false that p” is to argue that by asserting “it is false that p” the speaker implies that she believes that not-p. But then the speaker claims both to believe that p and believe that not-p, which is a contradiction. Cf. Cohen 1992, 68-69. A different analysis of Moore’s paradox has been put forward by Jaakko Hintikka. In his view, Moorean sentences violate the assumption that the speaker believes or can conceivably believe what she asserts. Hintikka maintains that it is impossible for the speaker to believe a Moorean sentence as a whole. See Hintikka 1962, 64-71.

¹⁵⁹ Edgely 1969, 90; cited from Buckareff 2005, 438-439.

¹⁶⁰ Buckareff 2005, 444 n. 15; Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 190.

that *p*” instead of something like “to be true that *p*”.¹⁶¹ Alston may be right, but we may nonetheless continue to speak of truth in this connection, as this concept is not used in any technical sense, but in a sense that makes it equivalent to such expressions as the one Alston favours.

A third and final point in Alston’s condition (2) that needs closer scrutiny is the idea of degrees of confidence or, to use a more familiar expression, degrees of belief. Though Alston declares having “some uneasiness” about this view, he maintains that beliefs can be “more or less firm, assured, confident, certain”.¹⁶² The idea is, roughly, that a person can be more or less certain about *p*’s truth, and this exemplifies the degree of her belief that *p*: the more certain the person is that *p* is true, the higher the degree of her belief that *p*. Swinburne espouses degrees of belief and says that his belief that the Second World War ended in 1945 is a strong one; he is strongly convinced of it. Then again, his belief that the War of the Roses ended in 1485 is less strong, because he thinks that he could have got the date wrong.¹⁶³

How can a person measure the degree of her belief that *p*? The aforesaid suggests that one route is simply considering and observing the level of confidence one has towards *p* being true. This approach seems to presume that beliefs include some type of feeling of conviction whose intensity can vary. Those who do not share this assumption will likely find the proposal wanting.¹⁶⁴ Pojman notes that another way to test the strength of belief is to imagine how surprised you would be if the proposition believed turned out to be false (cf. Alston’s condition (5)). In this case, the greater the surprise is, the higher the degree of the belief in question.¹⁶⁵ A third conceivable way to measure or fix the degree of belief that *p* is by reflecting upon one’s evidence or reasons for thinking *p* true. Having plenty of evidence for *p* would then

¹⁶¹ Alston 1996a, 5.

¹⁶² Alston 1996a, 5–6.

¹⁶³ Swinburne 2001b, 34.

¹⁶⁴ For example, in Frank Ramsey’s view the assumption is problematic and even observably false, “for the beliefs which we hold most strongly are often accompanied by practically no feeling at all; no one feels strongly about things he takes for granted.” Ramsey 1926, 169. Ramsey claims that the degrees of belief can nonetheless be tested by observing one’s readiness to bet on a proposition’s truth. Ramsey’s claim is, in short, that if *S* is willing to pay at most *x* for a bet that will pay *y* if a proposition *p* is true, then the degree of *S*’s belief that *p* is *x/y*. See Ramsey 1926, 179–180. So, for example, if *S* would be willing to put 3 euros on a bet that pays 5 if it rains tomorrow, the degree to which *S* believes that it rains tomorrow is 3/5. However, as Ramsey himself notes, his proposal is not wholly unproblematic. See Ramsey 1926, 172. Plantinga captures one issue in Ramsey’s account: a person’s degree of belief might not correspond with her betting behaviour, since the person may be, say, excessively cautious and will not bet unless she gets odds better than her actual degree of belief warrants. Plantinga 1993b, 118. So, for example, maybe the degree to which *S* believes that *p* is 3/5, and yet she will not pay 3 euros on a bet that pays 5 if *p* is true unless she gets odds of 4/5 to win.

¹⁶⁵ Pojman 1986a, 154. Kinghorn holds that the notion of surprise is instructive to the phenomenology of belief. He emphasises that it needs to be distinguished from other “emotive states” like shock or trauma that may accompany the discovery that one has believed something false. The greatness of such emotions will not indicate the degree of belief but how important the subject matter otherwise is to the believer. For example, if I were to learn, contrary to my beliefs, that my cat is missing and that the cafeteria is not open today, I imagine that my “epistemic surprise” would be fairly equal in both cases and so the degrees of the beliefs is the same. However, only the former finding would arouse in me a great deal of emotion, as I am quite fond of my cat but do not care much about the cafeteria’s opening hours. Kinghorn maintains that the notion of surprise includes the discovery that something about the world is not as one had expected: “And it is this feeling of expectancy, it seems to me, that best captures the phenomenology of believing.” Kinghorn 2005, 21–22.

imply a high degree of belief that p .¹⁶⁶ As with the first suggestion, opinions may vary on the accuracy or even adequacy of the second and the third ways to discern one's degree of belief.

Some philosophers think that the idea of degrees of belief can be further elaborated with the help of the concept of probability. Pojman, for example, maintains that the degree of one's belief that p can be defined in terms of person-relative subjective probability, that is, the probability a person thinks p has of being true. Accordingly, on an interval from 0 to 1, Pojman holds that if S thinks that $P(p) > 0.5$, S has some degree of positive belief that p ;¹⁶⁷ if S thinks that $P(p) < 0.5$, S has some degree of disbelief that p or, rather, some degree of belief that not- p ; and if S thinks that $P(p) = 0.5$, S is agnostic towards p or suspends judgment about p .¹⁶⁸ One might add that if S thinks that $P(p) = 1$, S is absolutely certain and is thus perhaps in a position to claim to know that p . Similarly, when $P(p) = 0$, not- p is known.

Though Pojman's proposal is clear, it might be asked how often we are capable of locating the precise or even approximate numerical probability of our beliefs. In line with this, Swinburne holds that for most "ordinary propositions" one cannot give an exact numerical value, but the most one can say is that one proposition is more probable than another one.¹⁶⁹ This leads us to Swinburne's view of belief, which also makes use of the concept of subjective probability. To begin with, in Swinburne's view belief is a contrastive notion: one proposition is believed against alternatives. Swinburne holds that normally the alternative to a proposition is its negation, but sometimes there are more alternatives. Thus, "Liverpool will win the cup" is typically contrasted with "Liverpool will not win the cup", but at times there can be a range of alternatives, say, "Arsenal will win the cup", "Aston Villa will win the cup", and so on.¹⁷⁰

Swinburne maintains that to believe that p is to believe that p is more probable than any alternative, which can be either just not- p or some set of relevant propositions. Note that in the latter case p is believed to be more probable than any alternative, but not necessarily more probable than their disjunction. Thus, p can be believed even if it is not believed to be more probable than not- p . For example, suppose S believes that $P(p) = 0.4$, $P(q) = 0.3$, and $P(r) = 0.3$. Here S believes p against q and r , since $P(p) > P(q)$ and $P(p) > P(r)$, though neither $P(p) > P(q \vee r)$ nor $P(p) > P(\text{not-}p)$.¹⁷¹ Swinburne's view of belief has an odd consequence. Consider the stated example: when S

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Pojman 1986a, 156; Swinburne 2005, 13–14. On belief and evidence, see section 2.1.1.

¹⁶⁷ It may strike one as awkward to say that S believes that p if S thinks that the probability of p is only marginally higher than 0.5. According to Swinburne, the hesitation arises here because the rules for the application of the concept of belief are not precise enough. Swinburne, nonetheless, follows the same use as Pojman. In his view it would be "extremely arbitrary" to choose some value of probability X between 0.5 and 1 such that only if S held that $P(p) > X$, S would believe that p . Swinburne concludes that though the use of the words may not be precise, there is a case to be made for the claim that if S thinks that $P(p) > 0.5$, S believes that p with some strength or another. Swinburne 2001b, 35–37.

¹⁶⁸ Pojman 2003, 536–537.

¹⁶⁹ Swinburne 2005, 16.

¹⁷⁰ Swinburne 2001b, 34, 36.

¹⁷¹ Swinburne 2001b, 36; 2005, 6–7.

reflects whether *p* or not-*p*, *S* does not believe that *p*, but when *S* reflects whether *p*, *q*, or *r*, *S* does believe that *p*. Swinburne seems to think that there is nothing anomalous in this.¹⁷²

Although we may sometimes believe against alternatives, to conceive belief universally as a contrastive notion might seem a bit strange. Typically, we seem to believe something without doing any comparisons.¹⁷³ The claim that we think about probabilities when we believe may also strike one as weird. Alston remarks that some people, say, small children, might lack the conceptual resources for even elementary probability judgments, but clearly they do have beliefs. Additionally, Alston holds that it is implausible to suppose that believers, who do have the resources for probability estimations, frequently make use of them, whether deliberate or unnoticed.¹⁷⁴ Swinburne appears to grant these points to Alston as he replies that on his account beliefs about *p*'s probability entail beliefs about *p*, but not necessarily *vice versa*.¹⁷⁵ He says that his account "constrains which beliefs about *p*'s probability can be held by a believer that *p*, but is compatible with her not having such beliefs".¹⁷⁶

While at least my experience seems to show that mine and others' beliefs can be more or less certain, some philosophers have cast doubt against the whole notion of degrees of belief. We already noted that Alston has some discomfort about the idea. Though he eventually embraces the view, he is inclined to think that belief excludes any doubt or uncertainty. In this case, he holds, other terms than "believe" can express states where one feels positive about *p* without feeling certain about it. So, instead of a degreed belief that *p*, Alston says that one may, for example, "be of the opinion that *p*", "be inclined to suppose that *p*", or "think it to be more likely that *p* than not".¹⁷⁷

It may be queried how reasonable Alston's proposal is, but his last alternative nonetheless indicates one way in which an attempt has been made to eliminate the notion of degrees of belief. As Schellenberg puts it, "many belief experiences that seem weak may really be experiences of probability beliefs".¹⁷⁸ That is, maybe what to *S* looks like a degreed belief that *p* does not, in fact, express the degree to which *S* believes that *p*, but the degree to which

¹⁷² See Swinburne 2005, 7.

¹⁷³ Cf. Schellenberg 2005, 63-64.

¹⁷⁴ Alston 1994, 26-27. Kinghorn argues that "Alston is certainly correct in noting that we do not typically make *conscious* judgments of comparative probability [...]. What seems less clear, however, is whether we do not commonly make *unconscious* probability assessments in daily life." Kinghorn 2005, 30. Alston says that he does not oppose positing unconscious cognitive operations when there is a reason to do so, but he can "think of no reason here more respectable than the desire to save a theory from refutation." Alston 1994, 26.

¹⁷⁵ Swinburne holds that this reply also avoids another objection Alston has made. According to Alston, Swinburne's view of belief involves an infinite regress. For example, if to believe that *p* amounts to believing that *p* is more probable than not-*p*, then to believe that *p* is more probable than not-*p* amounts to believing that (*p* is more probable than not-*p*) is more probable than not-(*p* is more probable than not-*p*), and so on *ad infinitum*. Alston 1994, 27-29. However, since Swinburne now claims that beliefs about *p* do not entail beliefs about *p*'s probability, his account seems to be unaffected by the regress, since it cannot even begin. Swinburne 2001b, 36 n. 8.

¹⁷⁶ Swinburne 2001b, 35-36, 36 n. 8.

¹⁷⁷ Alston 1996a, 6.

¹⁷⁸ Schellenberg 2005, 54.

S firmly believes that p is probable.¹⁷⁹ For example, if S thinks that $P(p) = 0.7$, why say that S believes to that degree that p instead of saying that S firmly believes that the probability of p is 0.7? In less exact cases where evoking probabilities is not a feasible option it could be argued that what appears to be a degreed belief that p really amounts to something like a strong belief about p's plausibility, truthfulness, or something in this vicinity.

Maybe the notion of degrees of beliefs can thus be dispensed with. Still, it might be pointed out that unless the concept is in some crucial way defective, there is no necessary reason to reduce degreed beliefs to flat-out beliefs about probability, certainty, plausibility, and the like. Besides, belief that p and belief, say, that p is likely appears to be different beliefs inasmuch as they have different propositions as their contents. The former is a belief about p's truth; the latter is a belief about p's likelihood. These beliefs need not exclude each other. A person may believe weakly that p and at the same time firmly believe that the likelihood of p is only modest.

Up till now we have surveyed fairly typical views about the nature of belief. Schellenberg, however, has challenged the rather common way of conceiving "belief as confidence", as he calls the approach. In his view, beliefs neither involve a feeling of confidence nor do they come in degrees in the sense discussed. What is more, Schellenberg argues that belief does not amount to thinking of a proposition under the appearance that it is true. In its place, he holds that to believe is to think of a state of affairs under the impression that it obtains.¹⁸⁰ The object of belief in Schellenberg's account is thus a state of affairs, not a proposition. The distinction between thinking of propositions and states of affairs is obviously important in Schellenberg's account and thus requires clarification.

What are states of affairs? Schellenberg holds that we can mentally put or view things or possible things in various arrangements, and thus we can represent to ourselves what he calls states of affairs. When this takes place, in Schellenberg's view we have a thought whose object is the state of affairs in question—or, rather, its representation. For example, Schellenberg says that "my cat chasing a mouse may at a certain time come to mind or be before my mind or be the object of a thought of mine in this way".¹⁸¹ Schellenberg emphasises that what one is thinking of in this case "is a possible arrangement of things, not a proposition indicating or representing or reporting that arrangement".¹⁸² On the face of it, this looks like an unusual view, but Andrew

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Plantinga 1993a, 166; 1993b, 118.

¹⁸⁰ Schellenberg 2005, 43-44. Schellenberg has offered multiple characterisations for belief. For example, in his view a believer has a thought of the relevant state of affairs "*being actual*"; she is "*simply thinking of the world*"; she is "*consciously experiencing (and reexperiencing) states of affairs as realized, or as belonging to what is real*"; she apprehends states of affairs "*under the concept reality*"; or she has a "*world-thought*". Schellenberg 2005, 46, 48, 50. Schellenberg's italics.

¹⁸¹ Schellenberg 2005, 41-42.

¹⁸² Schellenberg 2005, 42. Schellenberg's distinction bears some resemblance to the dispute between analog and propositional (or picture and description) accounts of mental imagery. According to Nigel J. T. Thomas, the analog side holds that mental representations we experience as mental imagery are much like pictures: they have intrinsic spatial representational properties of the sort pictures have (consider, for example, the spatial relationships on a photograph's surface). In contrast, Thomas holds, the

Chignell notes that Schellenberg's account of the state of affairs has some points of resemblance to the views of Roderick Chisholm, D. M. Armstrong, and Bertrand Russell.¹⁸³

If states of affairs are in Schellenberg's view arrangements of things that can figure as the objects of thought, what are propositions? Apart from saying that they indicate, represent, or report states of affairs, Schellenberg actually leaves the nature of propositions unanalysed. He says that "some would hold that a proposition itself is a state of affairs, since it is an arrangement of things of a certain sort," but in his view "here it suffices to say that a person who experiences belief has before her mind a state of affairs that is not a proposition [...]"¹⁸⁴ But this is not very helpful elucidation. One might also ask is the way Schellenberg makes the distinction between states of affairs and propositions a viable one. I would propose as a candidate for the nature of propositions just such things Schellenberg calls states of affairs.

Then again, there may be a difference between thinking of a non-propositional thing, say, my red cat, and thinking of a proposition, say, that my cat is red. And perhaps the former object of thought is what Schellenberg calls states of affairs. So, suppose we grant to Schellenberg his distinction and hold, like he does, that to believe is to think of a state of affairs under the impression that it obtains. Thus, when I consciously believe that my cat is red, according to Schellenberg's account I am thinking of a state of affairs consisting of my red cat as obtaining.

As said earlier, Schellenberg maintains that conscious belief does not involve a feeling of confidence and it is "all or nothing", that is, one either thinks of a state of affairs obtaining or one does not.¹⁸⁵ But why should these conditions hold? Evidently, one either thinks of a certain state of affairs or one does not do that, but I cannot see why one would have to necessarily think of it either as obtaining or not. I seem to have many thoughts of what supposedly are states of affairs, and all I can say about whether they obtain is maybe or probably. For example, the state of affairs consisting of nothing more than my friend being 182 cm tall is such a thought for me. Furthermore, in this particular case I even appear to recognise minor confidence when I think of this state of affairs. So, in other words, I seem to have a degreed belief here.

propositional side argues that mental representations are more like linguistic descriptions of visual scenes, and they are without inherently spatial properties. See Thomas 2014, ch. 4.4. Given this cursory depiction of the analog-propositional distinction, it seems that Schellenberg's states of affairs go well together with the analog view. This is further supported by the remark that Schellenberg actually uses pictorial language in his account. For example, he says that we might compare conscious belief to a photograph. See Schellenberg 2005, 50 n. 13. What is more, perhaps the things Schellenberg calls propositions similarly match with the propositional view of mental imagery. Then again, maybe these assimilations are too hasty. For example, I presume that Schellenberg could claim that states of affairs as objects of thought do not have intrinsic spatial properties. In this case his account would fall into the propositional group of the debate. It is also appropriate to note that in Thomas's view the analog and description accounts are irreconcilable: one cannot join them in the way done here as regards Schellenberg's account.

¹⁸³ See Chignell 2013, 200–201.

¹⁸⁴ Schellenberg 2005, 44 n. 8.

¹⁸⁵ Schellenberg 2005, 50, 52.

Schellenberg would likely reply to me that what I am experiencing is not actually a belief, that is, a thought of a state of affair obtaining, but what he calls a proposition-directed thought. Schellenberg argues that thoughts of propositions can come with feelings of confidence in some degree or another, especially when the epistemic status of the proposition is thought about.¹⁸⁶ However, I do not see why I would have to be thinking of a proposition in the case at hand. But if that is what I am doing, I am missing Schellenberg's distinction between thinking of states of affairs and propositions. Perhaps I am just so contaminated by propositional thinking that I cannot find states of affairs as objects of thought.

On the other hand, if I do discern states of affairs, Schellenberg's views on the phenomenology of belief seem to me unwarranted. What is more, if I recognise the states of affairs, I would probably rather label them as propositions and thus get rid of Schellenberg's distinction. The task Schellenberg gives to propositions would in this case be fulfilled by something else, for example, by such linguistic entities as sentences that can by convention indicate or represent or report the objects of thought, that is, the possible arrangements of things. It is worth pointing out that by this clearance I do not wish to say that some other notion of states of affairs could not be viable.¹⁸⁷ Still, in this study I shall be speaking of propositions and propositional beliefs.

1.2.3 CRITIQUE OF DIRECT DOXASTIC VOLUNTARISM

There is one aspect of the phenomenology of belief that deserves its own section, given the subject of this study. This is the question about the voluntariness of belief. The view that beliefs can be at least sometimes directly chosen at will is called direct doxastic voluntarism or volitionalism for short.¹⁸⁸ Although the thesis has in certain forms some supporters,¹⁸⁹ it is frequently held in theistic philosophy and analytic philosophy, in general, that volitionalism is implausible: beliefs are not the kind of things we can choose to have by a simple fiat of the will. In what follows, theistic philosophers' arguments against volitionalism will be analysed. But for starters it is appropriate to consider what exactly is involved in believing at will directly.

Pojman argues that three conditions are necessary and together sufficient for a minimal thesis of volitionalism. First, the acquisition of belief is a basic act. That is, some beliefs are acquired by acts of will directly.¹⁹⁰ Belief itself,

¹⁸⁶ Schellenberg 2005, 52.

¹⁸⁷ For some further discussion on Schellenberg's view of belief, see Chignell 2013, 200-205; Mourad 2008.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Pojman 2003, 537.

¹⁸⁹ See e.g. Ginet 2001; Montmarquet 1986; Mourad 2008; Ryan 2003; Shah 2002; Zeis 2013.

¹⁹⁰ We need not explore the notion of basic act closely, but a short note on it is nonetheless in order. Alston defines a basic act as an act that "can be done without doing it by doing something else". Alston 1996a, 7. In this way moving one's hand is presumably a basic act: it does not seem to be done by doing something else. Then again, to utilise Andrei Buckareff's example, scoring a goal in an ice hockey match is a non-basic act: the goal is done by shooting the puck, which is done by moving one's arms. The latest

Pojman notes, does not have to be an action—it may still be a disposition. Second, the acquisition of belief must be done in full consciousness. Pojman holds that acts of will can take place in greater or lesser awareness. Sometimes, he maintains, an “act of will” simply means a desire manifesting itself in action, such as finding myself going to the refrigerator when hungry.¹⁹¹ In Pojman’s view a proponent of volitionalism must assert that believing at will is not like this. Instead, it is a decision of which the person is fully aware. Thirdly, the belief must be acquired independently of evidential considerations; evidence is not what is decisive in forming the belief. In sum, Pojman says, “a volit must be an act of will whereby I acquire a belief directly upon willing to have the belief, and it is an act made in full consciousness and independently of evidential considerations”.¹⁹²

Volitionalism may be initially an attractive thesis. It may even look like a trivial truth. Although we occasionally speak as if belief is not voluntary (“I cannot believe anything like that!”), at the same time our experiences seem to confirm that sometimes beliefs can be and are formed at will.¹⁹³ Carl Ginet has defended this in his view “naïve intuition”. According to him, so that one can acquire the belief that *p* at will, one needs “to *count on* its being the case that *p*”. To count on its being the case that *p*, Ginet elaborates, is to stake something on *p*’s being so and to adopt a dismissive attitude towards the possibility of not-*p*, that is, to not prepare oneself for not-*p*. As one example, Ginet offers a person who may be uncertain whether she closed the door after leaving home, but who can nonetheless decide to count on her doing so in order to silence her worries and not having to go back to check the door. In this case the person has in Ginet’s view decided to believe at will that she closed the door.¹⁹⁴

While Ginet’s description may seem feasible, one may query whether the notion of belief underlying his account is akin to the one considered in the previous section. For if one subscribes to certain aspects of that view of belief, as the critics of volitionalism typically do, there seem to be compelling reasons to think that we do not, in fact, have direct control over beliefs. Volitionalism may give the impression of being supported by experience, because in everyday language the term “belief” appears to be used broadly to stand for a wide range of propositional attitudes, some of which are by all means voluntary.¹⁹⁵ So, possibly situations that seem to support the truth of volitionalism, like Ginet’s example, are best seen not as decisions to believe but as decisions to do something else, say, to act as if one believed.¹⁹⁶

act is basic, and thus it could be argued that non-basic acts are in the end generated by basic acts. See Buckareff 2011, 315–316.

¹⁹¹ Compare this to some habits, say, chewing one’s fingernails or stroking one’s beard. These actions can be done with lesser awareness. One just finds oneself doing them, if one notices the actions at all.

¹⁹² Pojman 1986a, 157–158; 2003, 537–538.

¹⁹³ Cf. Pojman 1986a, 149–150.

¹⁹⁴ Ginet 2001, 63–66.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Alston 1996a, 20; Pojman 1986a, 150.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Alston 1988, 266–267. Buckareff has argued against Ginet in this manner. According to him, in the type of cases Ginet considers one does not decide to believe a proposition, but she accepts it for practical purposes. See Buckareff 2004. See also Ginet 2001, 68, 74–75. On the notion of acceptance, see especially section 4.2..

What reasons, then, are there to suspect the cogency of volitionalism? Alston's early argument against this thesis simply consists in asking us to consider whether we have the power to believe at will. So, suppose you are offered 500 million dollars for believing that the U.S. is still a colony of Great Britain (while you hold that this is obviously false). Can you, Alston asks, at this moment start to believe this? Alston maintains that it seems clear to him that he has no such power, and he doubts that any human being has the power of acquiring beliefs at will.¹⁹⁷ Similar considerations against volitionalism have been offered, for example, by Jeff Jordan, Plantinga, Pojman, and Schellenberg.¹⁹⁸

As such, Alston's argument is not very convincing. A volitionalist might simply reply that contrary to Alston and his reservations, she can sometimes believe at will. It is appropriate to emphasise that volitionalism does not imply that each belief has to be voluntary. Ginet, for example, admits that there are many propositions one cannot decide to believe,¹⁹⁹ and among these propositions are presumably the ones that are seen as blatantly false, like Alston's example. Hence, merely pointing out that one cannot in a certain case or even in any conceivable case believe at will does not imply that it is an impossible feat for each person in any instance.

Alston's further criticism against volitionalism is based on the feeling that beliefs in his view include. Alston argues that this occurrent aspect of belief has a kind of immediacy that is something one experiences rather than carefully thinks out, that is, "it is a matter of one's being *struck by* (a sense of) how things are rather than deciding how things are."²⁰⁰ This, Alston holds, is connected to beliefs' involuntary character. This critique against volitionalism may be more convincing than Alston's first one. If beliefs do involve the kind of feeling Alston depicts, it seems hard to acquire them at will.²⁰¹ But in this case, too, some person, say, a master of autosuggestion, might claim that she can accomplish the act.

Pojman has criticised volitionalism by taking cognisance of the events of acquiring beliefs. He claims that considering typical cases of belief-acquisition confirm that forming a belief is an event in which the world forces itself upon the subject. This seems quite credible when we think about simple sense beliefs and elementary logical beliefs. Pojman says that upon seeing a white paper or hearing music, it seems obvious that we do not choose to believe these things before we believe them. The same appears to hold with respect to memory beliefs, which perhaps pertain more to the sustenance of beliefs than their acquisition. In Pojman's view, parallel analysis goes for abstract and logical beliefs. We do not choose to believe that the law of non-contradiction

¹⁹⁷ Alston 1988, 263-264.

¹⁹⁸ Jordan 2006, 38; Plantinga 2000, 96; Pojman 1986a, 167; Schellenberg 2005, 65-67.

¹⁹⁹ Ginet 2001, 74.

²⁰⁰ Alston 1996a, 5.

²⁰¹ If one argues that the feeling that belief purportedly involves is some kind of strong emotional confidence, this also confirms the view that belief is involuntary, since emotions are typically conceived as involuntary. However, this argument loses much of its plausibility, if, as I assume is sensible, it is denied that belief necessarily includes a robust emotion.

applies universally or that $2 + 2 = 4$. Instead, Pojman holds, we are compelled to believe these things after we understand what they assert.²⁰²

Pojman argues that a similar process is at work regarding theoretical beliefs, including scientific, religious, ideological, political and moral beliefs. As he puts it, “given a whole network of background beliefs, some views or theories are simply going to win out in my noetic structure over others”.²⁰³ This may be true, too, but again it should be noted that no matter how much experiential support one takes Pojman’s argument to have, in the end it only shows that typically beliefs are not acquired voluntarily. Pojman actually makes this concession here. He says that it seems dubious whether we believe at will, but yet such behaviour can never be conclusively ruled out (however, see his argument below).²⁰⁴

Both Alston’s and Pojman’s so-called phenomenological arguments against volitionalism point to the conclusion that believing at will is, as Alston phrases it, “psychologically impossible”.²⁰⁵ That is, it happens to be an ability we do not, or most of us do not, in fact, have. This leaves open the possibility that if our mental structure were different, believing at will might be possible. However, some have defended a stronger claim according to which believing at will is not merely psychologically difficult but conceptually or logically puzzling. For example, Swinburne claims that not being able to believe at will is “a logical matter, not a contingent feature of our psychology”.²⁰⁶

To me it looks like the arguments for the stronger conclusion against volitionalism use as a key premise some form of the Williamsian claim that belief aims at truth, that is, that to believe is to believe true (see section 1.2.2.). This does not seem to be a coincidence. According to Pojman, Williams’s to this day influential “Deciding to Believe” (1972) is largely responsible for making volitionalism once more a discussed subject in modern Anglo-American philosophy, and Williams holds that it is not only a contingent fact that beliefs cannot be acquired at will.²⁰⁷ The crux of Williams argument can be construed as follows: merely willing to believe that *p* does not indicate that *p* is true; believing that *p* at will would thus imply believing that *p* whether *p* was seen as true or not; but believing irrespective of what seems to be the truth is inconsistent with belief’s truth-aimed nature; so, believing at will is conceptually incoherent.²⁰⁸

Swinburne has offered an argument against volitionalism which is similar to that of Williams. He claims that if I knowingly chose at will to believe that I now see a table, I would realise that the belief originated from my will and thus had no connection with whether the table is there or not. But then I would have no reason for thinking that the belief indicates how things are, and thus I

²⁰² Pojman 1986a, 159-161.

²⁰³ Pojman 1986a, 161.

²⁰⁴ Pojman 1986a, 166-167; 2003, 539-540.

²⁰⁵ Alston 1988, 263.

²⁰⁶ Swinburne 2001b, 40.

²⁰⁷ Pojman 1986a, 110.

²⁰⁸ See Williams 1973, 148. For subsequent discussion on Williams’s argument, see Classen 1979; Govier 1976; Holyer 1983; Winters 1979; Pojman 1985; 1986a, 110-112.

would not actually believe. Swinburne notes that a parallel point goes for our inductive criteria, that is, to what we see as evidence for what. For if we decided on the criteria, we would realise that beliefs resulting from the use of the criteria were the result of our own choice and thus had no link with whether things were as the beliefs claimed. In Swinburne's view it is because one set of inductive criteria seems intuitively correct and the use of it is not voluntary that we trust that the resultant beliefs indicate how things are.²⁰⁹

For reasons akin to Williams's and Swinburne's, Pojman has also argued that volitional believing is "broadly a logical mistake".²¹⁰ Pojman explicitly starts with the premise that belief aims at truth, that is, to believe is to believe true. His argument is worth reciting here (I have made some stylistic modifications to it):

- (1) If S believes that p, S believes that p is true (by the concept of belief).
- (2) Typically, the truth of p is wholly dependent on the state of affairs,²¹¹ S, which either corresponds to p (and makes p true) or fails to correspond to p (and makes p false).
- (3) Typically, whether the state of affairs S that correspond to p obtains is a matter that is independent of S's actions and volitions.
- (4) Typically, S subconsciously or consciously believes or presupposes premise 3 (that is, we recognise intuitively that wishing does not make it so).
- (5) Therefore, typically, S cannot both believe that p and that S's belief is presently caused by her willing to believe that p. Instead, S must believe that what makes his belief true (if it is true) is state of affairs S, which obtains independently of her will.

Pojman makes several comments on his argument.²¹² I will mention two of them, as I believe them to be the most important ones. First, Pojman says that Audi has made an objection to his argument: it has force only if one supposes that the believer is rational; an irrational believer can presumably believe at will in some sense. Pojman doubts this—and he actually has no other options. The so-called logical arguments against volitionalism exclude as inconsistent the possibility of any type of conscious believing at will. As Pojman says, volitional believing is not simply irrational believing but "incoherently irrational", "for it represents confusion at the very heart of the concept of belief".²¹³

Secondly, Pojman remarks that his argument has not, in fact, ruled out the possibility of acquiring a belief at will in "less than full consciousness". This seems like a reasonable concession. Presumably, we can at times acquire beliefs rather unconsciously, and it does not seem impossible that in some

²⁰⁹ Swinburne 2005, 25.

²¹⁰ Pojman 1986a, 170.

²¹¹ This is not to be confused with Schellenberg's notion of state of affairs (see section 1.2.2.). For Pojman, the notion does not seem to be technical but means just the way things are in the world. See e.g. Pojman 1986a, 172.

²¹² See Pojman 1986a, 171-177.

²¹³ Pojman 1986a, 172-173.

such cases our will brings about the belief. But even so, Pojman holds that once one discovers that one's only basis for believing is the will, the belief withers away from one's noetic structure. According to Pojman, sustaining a belief merely at will in full consciousness has a similar incoherence attached to it, like the Moorean "I believe that p, but p is false".²¹⁴ I find Pojman's reasoning persuasive (see section 3.1.3.).

Thus far we have seen that there are reasons to suppose that one cannot knowingly acquire or sustain a belief at will. But this is not to say that volitions could not have any impact on the beliefs we hold. Instead, it is widely acknowledged that the will can have an indirect effect on what beliefs we have.²¹⁵ The ways in which this can happen is diverse, and this topic will receive closer analysis in later parts of this study (see especially section 3.3.; see also sections 2.1. and 3.2.). Here simple examples will suffice. So, for example, if I lack belief about the current weather, I can just look out of the window and belief follows. Then again, if I want to believe that I have cleaned my cat's litter box, I can get myself to believe that by actually cleaning the box. I can also try to train myself to be more critical towards different sources of belief, and this may in the course of time have an effect on which beliefs I hold. In addition, some suppose that beliefs can be acquired by questionable means, too, which require, say, some sort of manipulation of one's doxastic states (see section 3.2.).

1.2.4 CONCLUSION

As we have seen, in analytic theistic philosophy propositional belief is typically seen as a disposition towards certain outcomes, especially to a certain mental state. Alston's description of this conscious or occurrent aspect of belief aptly captures views of many theistic philosophers: to believe occurrently that p is to "feel it to be the case that p with some degree of confidence". Hence, belief is often taken to involve a feeling of conviction; typically, belief is assumed to come in degrees; and our beliefs are what we hold to be the case, that is, belief aims at truth. I would argue that one should not think of the feeling belief allegedly involves as a kind of robust emotional state. Alston, for example, only appears to seek to illustrate the passive nature of belief by using the term "feel". Given the nature of belief, it has been argued that consciously acquiring or sustaining a belief at will is psychologically puzzling and even conceptually incoherent. But this does not mean that volitions could not have an indirect impact on beliefs.

²¹⁴ Pojman 1986a, 170, 176-177; 2003, 540. On Moorean sentences see section 1.2.2..

²¹⁵ See e.g. Alston 1996a, 7; Bishop 2007, 30-33; Jordan 1996, 409-410; Plantinga 2000, 96; Pojman 1986a, ch. 9; Swinburne 2001b, 165.

2 FAITH, EVIDENCE, AND THE CAUSE OF BELIEF

In the previous chapter we saw that according to the analytic theists' appraisal, the cognitive aspect of faith is typically taken to consist of belief—or, rather, firm belief—towards the preferred propositions of faith. In the previous chapter we also saw that it is a widely held view in analytic theistic philosophy that belief is not under our direct voluntary control. These claims point to the conclusion that the cognitive aspect of faith, when it entails belief, cannot be chosen at will. Although this is a coarse inference, as such it has been generally embraced by theistic philosophers who discuss the voluntariness of faith.

Some questions immediately arise. If the will is excluded as a possible basis of faith-beliefs, as Bishop calls them,²¹⁶ what then grounds them? How are the beliefs acquired? What is more, if faith-beliefs are not directly voluntary, can the will have some indirect influence on the acquisition of the beliefs? Still further, can an account of faith that involves belief still be in some sense voluntary? Problems like these and the issues they highlight will be the main topics of this and the subsequent chapter. The theological question of the merit of faith and related topics is also relevant here and will be described and discussed to some extent in this chapter.

In order to believe propositions of faith, one clearly needs to be aware of them. But this recognition will not by itself yield belief in the propositions—at least not typically. For example, merely knowing that Christianity teaches that God is triune does not imply that one believes that God is triune. So, there is something needed that turns mere apprehension of a proposition into a belief in that proposition. What might this something be? In theistic philosophy one fairly typical answer is evidence.²¹⁷ This view could be described as the claim that having reasons or grounds which indicate the truth of *p*, that is, having evidence for *p*, produces or causes belief that *p*. That believing is tied to evidence goes well together with the view that belief aims at truth (see section 1.2.2.): one presumably comes to hold a proposition true (believes) once one has truth-indicating reasons for doing so (evidence).²¹⁸

That we believe in response to evidence may have some credibility in certain circumstances. For example, everyday perceptions (say, hearing a dog bark) may indicate the truth of certain propositions (there is a dog around the corner). That is, the perceptions or their propositional reports stand as evidence for certain other propositions, and thus they dispose us to believe these other propositions. But while this portrait of belief-acquisition may seem plausible in some situations, it may strike one as far-fetched with respect to some other cases, perhaps especially with respect to faith. It does not look like

²¹⁶ See Bishop 2007, 21.

²¹⁷ See e.g. Bishop 2007, 113; Kinghorn 2005, 25-28; Pojman 1986a, 172-173.

²¹⁸ Cf. Buckareff 2005, 438.

persons of faith often form or hold their faith-beliefs due to evidence, whatever that might be. However, precisely this is, in essence, the evidentialist Richard Swinburne's understanding of how one acquires and sustains faith-beliefs. His view on the evidence for the propositions of faith and the account of faith are analysed in section 2.1..

But besides going against *prima facie* experience, the view that faith-beliefs depend on evidence appears to go against traditional theological affirmations. Christian tradition has generally given to God, or, more specifically, to the Holy Spirit, an active role in a person's coming to have faith and so in a person's coming to hold faith-beliefs.²¹⁹ At first glance, this view seems to bear little resemblance to the claim that faith-beliefs are acquired via evidential considerations. The view that the Holy Spirit has a significant role in a person's acquisition of faith-beliefs has been recently espoused by Alvin Plantinga, who is the foremost proponent of Reformed epistemology. Plantinga's model of faith is chiefly influenced by the thought of Jean Calvin and Calvinism, in general, but he also considers his model to reflect Aquinas' view. Plantinga's model of faith is analysed in section 2.2..

2.1 SWINBURNE ON FAITH AND EVIDENCE

In what follows, I will first analyse Swinburne's view on what can be considered evidence for the propositions of faith. Secondly, I will scrutinise Swinburne's assessment of the merit of faith and related topics. This subject gives proper background to the subsequently analysed account of faith Swinburne presents in his influential *Faith and Reason* (1981; 2005).²²⁰ Swinburne can be seen as the initiator of the contemporary analytic theistic discussion on the nature of faith. He is best known for his extensive work on the evidential justification of theism and Christianity. However, as we shall see, his concerns are quite different regarding the question of what an adequate account of faith is. As an introductory remark one may say that in his discussion on faith Swinburne is not so much focused on the evidential justification of the propositions of faith, which in our terms pertains to the cognitive aspect of faith, as on the practical aspect of faith and the questions it gives rise to. This emphasis is hinted at by the name Swinburne gives to the account of faith he chiefly elaborates: the Pragmatist view of faith.

²¹⁹ See e.g. Kinghorn 2005, 3-4.

²²⁰ *Faith and Reason* is the last book of Swinburne's trilogy concerning the coherence and the justifiability of theism. See Swinburne 1977; 1979; 1981. The second revised editions of the trilogy appeared in 1993, 2004, 2005. In *Faith and Reason* Swinburne already begins to deal with specifically Christian themes on which he subsequently wrote a tetralogy. See Swinburne 1989; 1991; 1994; 1998. I will use here the second revised edition of *Faith and Reason*.

2.1.1 EVIDENCE FOR THE PROPOSITIONS OF FAITH

Before considering what in Swinburne's view can count as a person's evidence for the propositions of faith, some remarks about his general understanding of belief and evidence are in order. So, to begin with, Swinburne holds that to believe that *p* is to believe that *p* is more probable than any alternative (see section 1.2.2.). The probability involved in believing is in his view subjective probability, which is inductive probability as weighed by a particular believer's inductive criteria. In general, inductive probability is a measure of the extent to which one proposition *q* makes another proposition *p* likely to be true (where *q* and *p* can also stand for several propositions). Typically, Swinburne holds, *p* is some hypothesis and *q* is the evidence relevant to the hypothesis. Inductive probability is thus relative to evidence: whether a proposition is inductively probable depends on the evidence-class according to which the probability is assessed. As a result, Swinburne's ultimate claim about belief is this: *S* believes that *p* if and only if *S* believes that the total evidence available to him makes *p* more probable than any alternative.²²¹

Some propositions, Swinburne holds, a person believes solely on the grounds of other propositions which she believes make the former probable. In this case, I would say, the person believes a proposition by the propositional evidence that supports it.²²² But, Swinburne continues, certain propositions the person does not believe merely because of such propositional evidence but because the propositions just seem to be true and the person is inclined to believe them: "he is inclined to believe that they are forced upon him by his experience of the world". Such propositions Swinburne call the person's basic propositions.²²³

Among a person's basic propositions Swinburne lists ordinary propositional reports of perceptions and memories (I see a clock; It rained yesterday); propositions reason as opposed to experience seems intuitively to show true ($2 + 2 = 4$; if *A* is taller than *B* and *B* is taller than *C*, then *A* is taller than *C*); very general propositions about what there is in the world and how things work (China is a big country; almost everyone dies before the age of 125); and hunches and intuitions, which a person thinks are justified but cannot really say why (a person lost in the woods may have a hunch that a particular path leads home).²²⁴ I presume that the first and second types of propositions in Swinburne's list are fairly unproblematic, as they are mostly standard examples of basic propositions.²²⁵ It may also be apt to consider some

²²¹ Swinburne 2005, 15-17. See also Swinburne 2001b, 62.

²²² Cf. Jordan 2006, 44.

²²³ Swinburne 2005, 17.

²²⁴ Swinburne 2005, 17-21. Regarding very general propositions, Swinburne maintains that we do not normally recall how we learned them, but we do believe that we did learn them, have been told them often, and everything we learn fits with them. Swinburne holds that these propositions often form our "background knowledge" or "background evidence", which we also take into account when we judge the probability of beliefs of more limited scope. Here Swinburne refers to Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* (1969), and his view on the very general propositions may bear some minor resemblance to that of Wittgenstein. Swinburne 2005, 21, 21 n. 8.

²²⁵ Cf. e.g. Plantinga 1993a, 61, 177-178.

propositions in the third group as basic,²²⁶ and I see no insuperable reasons why propositions in the last category could not be that, too. I suppose that it is not unusual to experience “epistemic gut feelings” occasionally.

Swinburne argues that a person has different degrees of confidence in her basic propositions. In other words, basic propositions have for the person different degrees of prior probability, which is the probability a proposition has as such without reflection on other relevant propositions. Swinburne seems to hold that a basic proposition *p* acquires the status of basic belief that *p* for a person if *p*’s prior probability is taken by the person to be greater than 0.5 and other propositions the person has do not render *p* improbable. But if a basic proposition needs support from other propositions to render it probable overall and thus constitute a belief, it is not according to Swinburne a basic belief.²²⁷

As a terminological point I would suggest that just as some propositions are believed by propositional evidence, basic propositions and beliefs are held on the grounds of non-propositional evidence. This kind of evidence includes the various kinds of just-seeming-to-be-trues that accompany basic propositions and beliefs (they are self-evident, obvious, apparent, and the like). Jeff Jordan labels evidence of this type experiential evidence.²²⁸ Given these preliminary remarks, we can next consider what in Swinburne’s view can count as a person’s evidence for the propositions of faith. It is very important to note that what is adequate evidence for the propositions is a different question. With respect to this latter issue, philosophers’ views may diverge from each other remarkably.

To start with, Swinburne holds that some people clearly have a basic proposition that there is a God, which is produced by an apparent awareness of God’s presence. When this awareness is overwhelming, the proposition can in Swinburne’s view amount to a basic belief. Swinburne seems to think that the awareness of God is somewhat similar to the awareness people have of material objects or perhaps of such truths as $2 + 2 = 4$. Such awareness of God is, then, non-propositional evidence for the basic proposition or belief that God exists.²²⁹ Swinburne holds that basic belief that there is a God may often come to persons through participation in church worship. He notes that Plantinga in his early Reformed epistemology argued that belief that there is a God can be properly basic, that is, people can be rational in holding the belief as basic.²³⁰ Swinburne doubts whether people are often in this position. In his view many have had less than an overwhelming awareness of God’s presence,

²²⁶ Anthony Kenny, for example, includes similar propositions in his account. See Kenny 1992, 13-18.

²²⁷ Swinburne 2005, 18-19.

²²⁸ Jordan 2006, 44.

²²⁹ I assume that basic propositions or beliefs with religious content can be produced by a wide range of religious perceptions which then are non-propositional evidence for the basic propositions and beliefs in question.

²³⁰ See Plantinga 1983. While Plantinga’s later Reformed epistemology is more extensive than his earlier, in the later one he also argues for the proper basicity of Christian and theistic beliefs. See Plantinga 2000. See also section 2.2.

but they often know about evidence against God's existence, and so their basic proposition needs backing up by further evidence.²³¹

For some theists, Swinburne holds, basic beliefs about the events of their lives constitute a strong argument for the existence of God—many of their prayers may seem to have been answered, for example. Another class of argument which in Swinburne's view has had an influence at all periods is the argument from authority. For example, he holds that many medieval villagers believed that there is a God because their parents or the priest told them so. Moreover, in Swinburne's view the fact that people have come to live "sacrificial lives" in consequence of religious experiences and arguments provides some evidence for the truth of those experiences and arguments for other people.²³² Paul Moser appears to give a central place to this kind of evidence on authority, as he speaks of persons of faith becoming "personifying evidence of God's reality, in virtue of their willingly receiving and reflecting God's distinctive moral character for others".²³³

In the end, Swinburne argues that in the midst of religious scepticism, when there are good arguments against theism, and there are authoritative atheists as well as theists, most theists need arguments for the existence of God. Swinburne maintains that these arguments must start from rightly basic beliefs held by atheists and theists alike, and then proceed by mutually shared inductive criteria. To produce such arguments, Swinburne says, is the aim of natural theology.²³⁴ In addition, he holds that the historical truths of Christianity also need to be backed up by argument, beginning, in part, from generally recognised historical data.²³⁵ While Swinburne admits that historical arguments have not normally been conceived as a part of natural theology, in his view they belong to the same category of objective reasoning from public data.²³⁶ As a proponent of evidential theism Swinburne obviously stresses the significance of this kind of public propositional evidence in assessing the evidential status of the propositions of faith.

Swinburne notes that his view of belief and evidence is compatible with a person having nearly any belief, whether it is supported by public evidence or not. Consider a person who believes that there is a God while admitting that public evidence seems to count against the belief. Besides the possibility that the person can in this case hold the belief that there is a God as basic on the grounds of strong non-propositional evidence, in Swinburne's view the person

²³¹ Swinburne 2005, 23, 88-90.

²³² Swinburne 2005, 90-91.

²³³ Moser 2010, 215.

²³⁴ Swinburne also acknowledges that some philosophers have produced arguments for God's existence from premises reporting some supposedly logically necessary truth (consider, for example, the ontological argument). Swinburne is highly doubtful whether the truths are necessary. Swinburne 2005, 91.

²³⁵ "I stress 'in part' because the important events of the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus are events far more likely to have occurred if there is a God than if there is not, and hence the evidence of natural theology [concerning the existence of God only] is also evidence relevant to these events; and, conversely, detailed historical evidence about these events is relevant to arguments about whether or not there is a God." Swinburne 2005, 92.

²³⁶ Swinburne 2005, 91-92.

can claim that the public evidence has been wrongly or incompletely assessed. The person may hold that, contrary to appearances, the public evidence actually makes God's existence probable. Alternatively, Swinburne holds, the person can have private evidence, which may be a religious experience, say, of the Virgin Mary, from which the person infers that God must exist.²³⁷ When Moser argues that proper evidence for God's existence can be discerned in each person's conscience where God calls the person into a moral transformation, this presumably counts as a specific kind of private evidence from which God's existence can be inferred.²³⁸

While Swinburne's account of belief and evidence is compatible with a person having almost any belief, he argues that it rules out the possibility that a person could believe that *p* while recognising that all the public evidence rendered *p* improbable and that she had no other evidence. As an example, Swinburne considers Tertullian's claim that it is worthy to believe that the Son of God was buried and rose again, because that is impossible. If this claim is taken at face value, in Swinburne's view the right response is that impossibility is not just an improper ground for belief, but that no one can believe a proposition on such grounds. For Tertullian's assertion would involve claiming that all evidence counts against the relevant proposition. But if Tertullian believes this, he must believe that the proposition is improbable, and thus he cannot believe that it is true. Swinburne concludes that "there are logical limits to the possibilities for human irrationality, and even Tertullian cannot step outside them".²³⁹

As a result, in Swinburne's view the link between belief and evidence is a close one: one cannot believe a proposition unless one thinks one has some kind of evidence for it. And the same goes for believing the propositions of faith. Swinburne's reasoning strikes me as cogent (for further discussion see section 3.1.3.). But it must be highlighted that the evidence required for believing need not be some sort of objective or adequate evidence, whatever that is taken to be. Instead, all that is required for a person to believe that *p* is that she from her subjective viewpoint sincerely thinks that she has evidence for *p*, and such evidence may be something that other persons deem entirely inadequate.

2.1.2 FAITH, MERIT, GRACE, AND THE WILL

Thus far we have analysed Swinburne's understanding of what can be a person's evidence for the propositions of faith. In his view, a person must have some such evidence in order to believe the propositions. But, Swinburne notes, what Christianity commends is not holding beliefs but having faith. The view that identifies faith with believing certain propositions Swinburne labels the Thomist view because in his view Aquinas among others advocated it.

²³⁷ Swinburne 2005, 22-23.

²³⁸ Moser 2010, 145, 147-149, 200-202.

²³⁹ Swinburne 2005, 23-24.

Swinburne holds that this account of faith is odd. In what follows, I will in the main consider Swinburne's reading of Aquinas' view of faith. This will illuminate such themes as the nature, voluntariness, and merit of faith, on the one hand, and the relationship between God's grace and faith, on the other. Attention will be paid to Swinburne's appraisals about these issues, as they are relevant for his own account of faith.

In Swinburne's view the Thomist view of faith as mere belief is strange for the following reason. Christianity normally regards faith as a virtue: a person who has faith deserves praise or merit and/or will be rewarded with salvation (and this rendering is no doubt attributable to God). But, Swinburne argues, a person with Thomist faith can be a complete scoundrel because it is possible to have the required faith-beliefs and yet seek to do only evil. According to Swinburne's conviction, such a person cannot attain salvation.²⁴⁰ Consequently, Swinburne holds that Thomist faith cannot be a saving faith, which must then amount to something else than just believing something.

However, as Swinburne interprets it, Aquinas grants that having faith in the sense of having mere belief is not meritorious. Aquinas holds that the devils have such faith, but they lack two things that would make their faith meritorious. First of all, in Aquinas' view the faith of the devils is imperfect, because the beliefs which constitute their faith are not acquired in the right way, namely, voluntarily. Secondly, Aquinas maintains that the faith of the devils is not "formed by love". Let us consider the former first. Aquinas holds that the devils are involuntarily forced to believe "by the evidence of signs". Thus, as Swinburne puts it, the devils' faith is not meritorious faith, because it is not voluntary faith. In contrast, Aquinas in Swinburne's view holds that the signs are not so evident for humans, and thus humans can choose whether to believe the relevant propositions of faith. And if we choose to believe them, it is to our credit.²⁴¹ It may be worth mentioning that a similar view according to which faith-beliefs are acquired at will has been held by many in the Christian tradition.²⁴²

Swinburne's analysis of Aquinas is close to what John Jenkins has labelled "the voluntarist interpretation" of Aquinas. In short, this view claims, in our terms, that in Aquinas' view there is for humans some evidence for the propositions of faith but not enough to yield firm belief, and that is why belief in them must be produced by an act of the will. Jenkins argues, however, that even nuanced voluntarist interpretations, which he takes James Ross and

²⁴⁰ Swinburne 2005, 138, 140.

²⁴¹ Swinburne 2005, 140. See *Summa Theologiae* 2a. 2ae. 5.2.

²⁴² Kinghorn describes this as follows: "The Christian tradition seems widely to have assumed that among those morally significant decisions a person makes are decisions whether or not to hold certain Christian beliefs. Origen remarked that, if the word of God does not change some people's nature, 'the cause must be held to lie in their own will, which is reluctant to accept the belief that the God over all things is a Judge of all the deeds done during life'. Augustine cited St Paul as an example of one who 'refused to believe' but was turned by Christ into a 'willing believer'. Kierkegaard, in reference to those religious beliefs central to Christian commitment, commented that an individual 'may believe if he wills it'. And Vatican II, following Aquinas, described the person of faith as one who is 'freely assenting to the truth revealed by [God]'." Kinghorn 2005, 83.

Eleonore Stump to advocate, are implausible.²⁴³ In their place Jenkins argues for “a supernatural externalist interpretation” of Aquinas. According to this view, for Aquinas acquisition of faith-beliefs requires supernatural gifts or graces from God.²⁴⁴ Jenkins’s construal is detailed, but a brief analysis of it is relevant for our discussion.

Jenkins holds that for Aquinas the theological virtue of faith is a gift or grace infused into a human by God, and it amounts to a “rudimentary inclination” to believe the propositions of faith. Two further things are required for this virtue to be turned into a steady habit of firm belief. First, the virtue must be complemented by the prompting of the Holy Spirit along with the infused Gifts of Understanding and *Scientia* (*donum intellectus* and *donum scientiae*). By the former gift one immediately understands the propositions of faith as those that should be believed on divine authority and adhered to despite contrary considerations. By the latter gift one subsequently believes the propositions of faith in an immediate, non-inferential manner—in a basic way, in our terms. The second prerequisite for firm belief is God-infused “light of faith” (*lumen fidei*), which makes manifest the propositions of faith in the same way as natural intellectual light makes manifest such naturally known principles as “man is a rational animal”. Thus, by the infused light of faith along with the gifts and the promptings of the Holy Spirit (henceforth simply grace/graces), the soon-to-be believer non-inferentially understands the propositions of faith adequately and believes them to be divinely revealed.²⁴⁵

Jenkins’s Aquinas does not seem to leave much room for the will in the acquisition of faith-belief: the graces from God seem to do all the work. However, this is an inference Jenkins disputes. His interpretation of the voluntariness issue is quite complex, but he does say that for Aquinas forming faith-belief, unlike forming belief about naturally known principles, requires “a deliberate act of the will co-operating with grace, and so it is voluntary and meritorious”.²⁴⁶ Hence, in Jenkins’s view Aquinas holds that for the acquisition of faith-beliefs an act of will is required by the human in addition to the graces.

In this connection one might note that to claim that grace is irresistible, that is, that it is not just a necessary but also a sufficient condition for the acquisition of faith-belief, would entail the doctrine of predestination. On the other hand, to claim conversely that a human can acquire faith-beliefs without God’s help and grace would be something akin to the heretic view of Pelagianism. Incidentally, if not further elaborated, the first-mentioned voluntarist interpretation of Aquinas can be accused of embracing Pelagianism, since it claims that faith-belief must be produced by an act of

²⁴³ See Jenkins 1997, 175–185. See Ross 1985; 1986; Stump 1991.

²⁴⁴ Jenkins 1997, 186.

²⁴⁵ Jenkins 1997, 156, 190, 192, 196. See e.g. *Summa Theologiae* 1a. 2ae. 62.1., 68.2., 110.3.; 2a. 2ae. 8.6., 9.1.

²⁴⁶ Jenkins 1997, 196.

will.²⁴⁷ In contrast, Jenkins's preferred interpretation of Aquinas seems to be between the predestinarians and the pelagians: grace is necessary, but in addition an act of will is required by the human for the acquisition of faith-belief.

Swinburne makes here an objection to Aquinas' view that is obvious given our discussion about the nature of belief and seems to apply both to the voluntarist and to Jenkins's supernatural externalist interpretation of Aquinas. The objection is that belief is not voluntary (see section 1.2.3.).²⁴⁸ Humans cannot just choose to believe at will the propositions of faith in the way Aquinas seems to suppose. And, one must apparently add, this cannot happen even if aided by God's grace. To me it seems that there is also another problem for Jenkins's Aquinas to which I have already pointed. If the graces make the propositions of faith manifest for a prospective person of faith in the way Jenkins describes, it is hard to see why an act of will by a human would be required to produce belief in them. Instead, the graces, as one might say, look like they make the propositions believed by some kind of non-propositional evidence.

Jenkins appears to contend with a similar problem.²⁴⁹ Ultimately he seems to hold fast to the view that in Aquinas' view the will does command belief. But he also highlights another way Aquinas thinks the will is involved in the formation of faith-belief, and this way does not seem to entail doxastic voluntarism. Jenkins's point could be put as follows. The prospective believer must have by her prior voluntary acts developed such a suitably good character that forming the faith-beliefs by the graces can occur efficiently. An improper, bad character can apparently obstruct this process and resist the graces. So, in this "indirect sense" Aquinas in Jenkins's view sees the will as having an influence on the formation of faith-beliefs.²⁵⁰ One might also suggest that the will may be needed when the graces begin to form belief in a person in the sense that it keeps the person attentive in this process.

Whatever one thinks about Jenkins's explanation about the voluntariness issue, Swinburne at any rate opts for a different solution. He argues that if we want to maintain that having faith-belief is voluntary and thus meritorious, we have to say that the voluntariness of it results from adequate investigation. That is, one can voluntarily start an impartial inquiry by which one can eventually come to have evidence sufficient to yield belief in the propositions of faith.²⁵¹ It is noteworthy that this view is not far from what Jenkins calls the "naturalist interpretation" of Aquinas. According to this view, Aquinas claims that one comes to hold faith-beliefs on the basis of evidence gained by sound arguments for the propositions of faith.²⁵² In this case, one believes eventually

²⁴⁷ While commenting specifically on Aquinas' view of faith, Swinburne does not mention that Aquinas stresses the importance of grace. Elsewhere, however, he is aware of this aspect of Aquinas' thought. See Swinburne 2005, 118-119.

²⁴⁸ Swinburne 2005, 140. Cf. Kinghorn 2005, 83.

²⁴⁹ See Jenkins 1997, 203-204.

²⁵⁰ Jenkins 1997, 206-210.

²⁵¹ Swinburne 2005, 140-141.

²⁵² Jenkins 1997, 163.

by appreciating acquired evidence, and thus the naturalist view does not entail direct doxastic voluntarism. For this reason the naturalist view diverges from the voluntarist interpretation, where the evidence is taken to be insufficient and an act of will is seen as a necessary requirement in order to believe. (Given his grace-focused interpretation, Jenkins obviously thinks that just like the voluntarist interpretation, the naturalist reading of Aquinas is defective.)

Swinburne's naturalist solution to the problem of voluntariness and meritoriousness of faith-beliefs seems feasible only on the supposition that the evidence which the investigation yields does, in fact, support the truth of the propositions of faith. In this case believing the propositions can perhaps be in a certain sense meritorious: holding evidentially justified beliefs as a result of honest inquiry presumably deserves praise, maybe from God, too, as Swinburne apparently supposes. What is more, Swinburne seems to hold that those to whom faith-beliefs are from the outset overwhelmingly obvious—he presumably means those who have strong faith-beliefs held in a basic way—will be in the same position as the devils. Their having faith-beliefs is neither voluntary nor meritorious.²⁵³

Is Swinburne in his naturalist solution embracing the Pelagian view that grace is not necessary for the acquisition of faith-beliefs? This is a conclusion he seeks to avoid. Swinburne wishes to construe the doctrine about the need for grace as the view that grace normally operates by leading us to appreciate the strength of the arguments for the propositions of faith. But in his view there is no reason from the Christian tradition to insist that this grace is always or even usually supernatural “in the sense of God intervening in our mental processes in a miraculous way” so that one comes to hold faith-belief. Instead, Swinburne holds, “if there is a God, he gives us, and sustains in us, our rational nature and may help us in many other ways to understand the force of arguments”.²⁵⁴ As a result, and all things considered, in Swinburne's outline God's grace is not in any crucial sense vital for the acquisition of Christian belief. From the traditional Christian viewpoint, which emphasises the importance of supernatural grace, this may strike one as a defect (see also section 2.2.).

Returning to the devils' lot, we have seen that in Aquinas' view one reason why the devils' faith is not meritorious is that their faith-beliefs are not voluntary in any way. As to the second and in Swinburne's view more substantial reason why the devils' faith according to Aquinas lacks merit is that it is not “formed by love” (*fides caritate formata*).²⁵⁵ That is, Swinburne elaborates, the devils' faith is not joined to the firm purpose of doing those actions which love for God involves. Swinburne holds that the Council of Trent put the point similarly, and it did not in his view insist that actual good works are needed for meritorious faith but only a complete readiness to do them,

²⁵³ Swinburne 2005, 141.

²⁵⁴ Swinburne 2005, 118-120.

²⁵⁵ It is perhaps suitable to note that *caritas*, which is typically translated as charity, is a theological virtue along with hope (*spes*) and faith (*fides*). According to Thomism, each of these virtues presupposes supernatural grace. See e.g. Jenkins 1997, 148.

since someone might acquire love and then die before she had any opportunity to do any good actions.²⁵⁶ So, in the terminology introduced in section 1.1.2., meritorious Thomist faith, as construed by Swinburne, stresses the importance of the practical aspect of faith accompanied by, in a specific sense, voluntary belief as its cognitive aspect.²⁵⁷

In the view of faith he elaborates, Swinburne emphasises the practical aspect of faith, and he does that for much the same reason as stated above: doing or being disposed to do good works is meritorious and leads to salvation. Before analysing Swinburne's account of faith we should briefly consider his assessment of the Lutheran view of faith, as it includes ideas relevant to his own view. Swinburne argues that the Lutheran view stresses, besides believing certain propositions, trust in God.²⁵⁸ What does this mean? Swinburne proposes that trusting in God, like trusting any person, amounts to a sort of action:

[Trusting in God] is presumably to act on the assumption that He will do for us what he knows that we want or need, when the evidence gives some reason for supposing that He may not and where there will be bad consequences if the assumption is false.²⁵⁹

In Swinburne's view trusting appears to be in some sense vulnerable: a person who trusts exposes herself to bad outcomes, if things do not turn out as assumed (for further discussion, see section 4.4.1.).²⁶⁰

Swinburne thinks that Lutherans would likely agree with his interpretation according to which adequate trust in God is basically equivalent to pursuing the good purposes love of God according to the Thomist view involves. A person who trusts God with evil purposes cannot in Swinburne's view exhibit trust that is suitable for salvation. So, to give a crude example, a person who does morally good actions on the assumption that God will give her salvation is, according to Swinburne's depiction, trusting God in the right way, whereas a person who tries to oppress others on the assumption that God helps her in this task is not doing that. Swinburne points out that for Lutherans exhibiting trust does not involve merit, as they hold that persons' salvation is not based on merits.²⁶¹

The way Swinburne elaborates the Thomist and the Lutheran view makes it possible for him to say that the Thomist meritorious faith, that is, faith formed by love, will, in fact, entail and be entailed by the Lutheran faith, and that thus the Reformation controversy about whether faith alone secures salvation seems only a dispute based on confusion about the meaning of words. Swinburne holds that both sides of the debate could agree that love is

²⁵⁶ Swinburne 2005, 141. See *Summa Theologiae* 2a., 2ae., 4.3., 4., 5..

²⁵⁷ To speak about "faith formed by love" and "love of God" might seem to imply that we are talking about some kind of emotion and so about the evaluative-affectual aspect of faith instead of the practical aspect. However, this is misplaced if Swinburne's interpretation is correct. Love of God, as he conceives it, is not chiefly a matter of feeling something but doing something.

²⁵⁸ Swinburne 2005, 142-143. Cf. McGrath 1994, 127-128.

²⁵⁹ Swinburne 2005, 144.

²⁶⁰ Cf. Schellenberg 2005, 110. See also McLeod 2011, ch. 1. For a broader discussion on the nature of trust, see e.g. Lagerspetz 1998; McLeod 2011.

²⁶¹ Swinburne 2005, 145.

needed in addition to Thomist faith (that is, faith as mere belief), while admitting that Lutheran faith suffices, since it includes love.²⁶² Although I will not here consider the accuracy of Swinburne's claims in detail, one might query, for example, whether his action-focused description of trust properly reflects the Lutheran view of trust.²⁶³ Still, here Swinburne's notion of trust is taken for granted and it has been anyway influential. We can thus say that trusting God is to exemplify the practical aspect of faith.

2.1.3 TRUSTING GOD WITH WEAK BELIEF: THE PRAGMATIST VIEW OF FAITH

In his own view Swinburne accentuates faith as goal-oriented action. As he succinctly says on one occasion, "the faith needed for religion is basically a commitment to seek a goal by following a way".²⁶⁴ Swinburne holds that following the Christian way amounts to doing those actions which the love of God would lead one to do, and this in his view is equal to pursuing three goals: rendering proper reverence to God, attaining one's own salvation, and helping others attain theirs.²⁶⁵

Committing oneself to the Christian way can obviously take place with a firm (convinced, strong) belief that the way is truthful and leads to the goals sought after. However, Swinburne holds that such a strong belief is not a necessary requirement for the rational pursuit of the Christian way. In terms of the Lutheran faith, as he understands it, Swinburne argues that it is possible to trust God without convinced belief. This is what Swinburne labels the "Pragmatist view of faith".²⁶⁶

How can one trust without belief? Swinburne argues that besides acting on beliefs it is possible to act on assumptions, which amount to doing those actions one would do if one did believe. And what is relevant for the present case, Swinburne holds that one cannot merely act on the assumption that God, whom one believes to exist, will do for one what one wants or needs (the Lutheran view of faith), but also on the assumption that there is such a God. Consequently, Swinburne holds that in the Pragmatist view,

a person has Christian faith if he acts on the assumption that there is a God who has the properties which Christians ascribe to him and seeks to do those good actions which the love of God (if there is a God) would lead him to do.²⁶⁷

²⁶² Swinburne 2005, 146.

²⁶³ For example, Petri Järveläinen's construal of Luther's notion of trust is wholly dissimilar to that of Swinburne. Järveläinen argues that for Luther trust (*fiducia*) pertains to the certainty of faith: it is an affection that is formed in a person as she realises in conjunction with the experience of grace that her convinced faith-belief is supernaturally caused by the Holy Spirit. Järveläinen 2000, 100-104. From this point of view one could say that trusting does not so much belong to the practical aspect of faith, as Swinburne seems to suggest, but to its cognitive aspect. Incidentally, Järveläinen's interpretation of Luther's trust bears a resemblance to Plantinga's model of faith, which is influenced by Reformed thought. See section 2.2..

²⁶⁴ Swinburne 2001a, 211.

²⁶⁵ Swinburne 2005, 167, 188.

²⁶⁶ Swinburne 2005, 147.

²⁶⁷ Swinburne 2005, 148.

Since in Swinburne's view doing the good actions love of God involves is the same as trusting in God (see his interpretation of the Lutheran view), it follows that a person who exemplifies the Pragmatist view of faith trusts God without a belief that there is a God.

Following John Bishop, one might ask what could motivate a person to do the good actions if one does not believe that there is a God.²⁶⁸ Swinburne argues that the person does the actions because she conceives the goals thus possibly attained so worthwhile, more worthwhile than some mundane goals, that "it is worth doing them in the hope that they will attain those goals".²⁶⁹ When stated in this way, Swinburne's view of faith somewhat surprisingly resembles the views of those who argue that having faith is feasible with mere hope (see Pojman's view in section 4.3.). Paul Helm even seems to suggest that it would be better to characterise Swinburne's Pragmatist faith as a case of religious hope.²⁷⁰

Swinburne says that he has labelled the account of faith at hand as the Pragmatist view owing to James's "The Will to Believe" (see the introduction). According to Swinburne's interpretation, James was commending faith as acting-as-if a religious hypothesis were true, since it can offer vital good now and possibly eternal well-being hereafter. Swinburne holds that James just confuses things by calling this "acting-as-if" "believing". So, according to Swinburne's analysis, adopting a religious hypothesis in the Jamesian sense does not amount to believing the hypothesis at will, as the title of the article suggests, but living or acting as if it were true. Swinburne holds that the Pragmatist view was also espoused by Kierkegaard. "The leap of faith", which Kierkegaard commends, is in Swinburne's view a matter of acting-as-if with "the passion of the infinite".²⁷¹

Swinburne claims that the person of Pragmatist Christian faith need not believe that there is a God in the sense that it is more probable than not that there is a God. However, he holds, a person does need another kind of belief, namely, the so-called weak belief: to pursue the Christian way in order to achieve the goals sought after, the person needs to believe that it is more probable that the pursuit of that way will attain the goals than the pursuit of any other way will, including doing nothing.²⁷² For example, Swinburne says, the person needs to believe that she is more likely to honour God by attending to Christian worship than by doing nothing, and more likely to get to Heaven by feeding the starving than by taking heroin. This kind of means-end beliefs Swinburne takes to derive from the Christian creed, broadly understood (cf.

²⁶⁸ Bishop 2007, 120.

²⁶⁹ Swinburne 2005, 148. As Swinburne is here speaking about the positive evaluation of the possible outcomes of having faith, we are somewhere in the neighbourhood of the evaluative-affective aspect of faith.

²⁷⁰ Helm 2000, 148-149.

²⁷¹ Swinburne 2005, 148-149. See Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Vol. 1.

²⁷² This is a simplification of Swinburne's view, but it suffices for our needs. The possibility that more than one way will equally likely attain the sought goal is omitted here. For further discussion, see Swinburne 2005, 9-10, 197-198. See also Swinburne's view on belief as a contrastive attitude in section 1.2.

Audi's creedal faith in section 1.1.1.). So, in Swinburne's view the weak belief which faith calls for is that the Christian creed is more probably true than its relevant alternatives. And this, of course, presumes that the person believes that there is some probability that God exists.²⁷³

So, it is not that the Pragmatist view of faith lacks belief altogether but, as Swinburne puts it, "it involves less in the way of belief-that".²⁷⁴ It may be instructive to consider an artificial illustration. When lost in a maze and faced with a choice of several routes, a person may think on the evidence at hand that none of the routes has a probability above 0.5 of leading out of the maze, but she can still think that one of them has the best chances of doing that. The person may think, for example, that a certain route's probability of leading out is 0.3, whereas the probability of each other route is somewhere below 0.25. In this case, the person does not firmly believe that any of the routes leads out of the maze, and yet she does weakly believe that one of them does that. In a comparable way, a person may not think it very likely that the pursuit of any religious way leads, say, to salvation, but she may think that Christianity has the best chances of doing that. In this case, the person believes weakly in the efficacy of the Christian way to lead to salvation.²⁷⁵

There may be diverse views as to how low the probability in the weak belief can be so that acting on it is still sensible. This will likely depend on how pursuit-worthy the goals of Christianity are seen.²⁷⁶ For example, a person may think that the prospect of salvation is so appealing that it is according to her appraisal still rational to pursue the Christian way even if the probability of its being true is very low (but not lower than that of the relevant rival ways). As for Swinburne, he holds that Christianity has the best goals to pursue, and he has argued for the high probability of its creed being true on public evidence. So, according to Swinburne's assessment, exercising Christian faith is highly rational. As he says, "it will be the best thing for anyone to do with his life."²⁷⁷

Could not a person pursue the Christian way without the weak belief? Swinburne claims that it would not be merely irrational but logically impossible to pursue a religious way in order to obtain a goal if the person believed that pursuing that way would make it less likely for her to obtain the goal than otherwise.²⁷⁸ Perhaps this is true, but in looser terms I find no unfeasibility in having a kind of Pragmatist faith without the weak belief. Consider a person who finds the Christian worldview attractive but believes that there are only very slim chances of its being true. I see no reason why such a person would necessarily have to form a weak belief about the relative probabilities of rival religious ways before she can meaningfully realise a type of tentative Christian faith. Surely such a person could, for example, seek and

²⁷³ Swinburne 2005, 149-150, 198, 225-226. For further discussion on the "creedal belief", see Maitzen 1991; Swinburne 2005, 151-153.

²⁷⁴ Swinburne 2005, 150.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Swinburne 2005, 32, 197.

²⁷⁶ Cf. Swinburne 2005, 265.

²⁷⁷ Swinburne 2005, 266, 268.

²⁷⁸ Swinburne 2005, 197.

call out to God and make an agnostic prayer beginning with the words “God, if you are there...”.²⁷⁹

Paul Helm argues that there are some problems in Swinburne’s account of faith. To begin with, whereas Swinburne maintains that a person can trust in God whom she does not, on balance, believe exists, in Helm’s view this does not seem plausible at all. Helm allows that a person may trust S while unbeknownst to the person S does not exist, which in Helm’s view is “a case of mistakenly directed belief”. But, Helm asks, how could the person trust S while being aware that she does not believe that S exists? Helm holds that “I trust God but I do not believe that he exists” looks like a paradox of belief that rivals Moore’s (see section 1.2.2.). And in his view the same conclusion holds if the non-belief is substituted for the belief that it is merely possible that God exists.²⁸⁰

Helm’s critique may be *prima facie* credible, but if we presume Swinburne’s notion of trust, there does not seem to be any problem in trusting someone who is not believed, on balance, to exist. Consider an analogy Swinburne has offered. A prisoner is told that she will be rescued by the Big Chief from the yard of the prison if she can get there at night. The prisoner, however, does not believe this rumour; she does not believe that there is any Big Chief. Still, she admits that the rumour has some credibility, and she finds it impossible to escape the prison in any other way. So, the prisoner believes that it is more probable that she will attain her goal of escaping by acting on the assumption that the Big Chief exists and rescues her than by acting on any other assumption. Hence, the prisoner tries to get to the yard while knowing that she will be punished unless she has succeeded in escaping. According to Swinburne, the prisoner is here appropriately described as putting her trust in the Big Chief, whom she does not, on balance, believe exists.²⁸¹ So, it is possible to trust S while not firmly believing that S exists, and thus Helm’s critique fails.

Helm’s further criticism against Swinburne pertains to the question of the merit and voluntariness of faith. According to Helm, Swinburnean trust, “that is, to act on the assumption that p, is to act as if p were more certain than it is”. Because of this, Helm sees Swinburnean trust as making up for evidential deficiency.²⁸² Helm’s point seems to be that trust is called for where one lacks evidence and thus firm belief about the dependability of the object of trust. But, Helm argues, to decouple trust and belief in this way leads to a paradoxical situation in the case of faith. His ultimate claim in this respect seems to be that, given Swinburne’s account, the more evidence one has for

²⁷⁹ Cf. Kenny 1979, 129; Price 1969, 484-486.

²⁸⁰ Helm 2000, 149.

²⁸¹ Swinburne 2005, 226-227. As Helm’s critique illustrates, it seems natural to argue that, or at least ask whether, “trust in God” and similar locutions “to have faith in God” and to “believe in God” presuppose the propositional belief that there is a God. However, as long as one does not carefully define what is meant by the former group of attitudes, there is no point in asking whether they imply, say, a propositional belief concerning their object’s existence. As Swinburne’s view illustrates, if trust is defined in the way he does, there is nothing odd in the claim “I trust in God but do not (on balance) believe that God exists”. For a similar claim as regards “faith in”, see Schellenberg’s view of faith in section 4.4.1.

²⁸² Helm 2000, 143.

the propositions of faith and the stronger Christian belief one thus has, the less room there is for the exercise of voluntary and hence meritorious trust. So, since trusting is in Swinburne's view central to exemplifying the Pragmatist faith, having a strong belief seems to exclude or reduce the opportunities for its exercise.²⁸³

Helm holds that here appears to be a conflict of aims in Swinburne's work. On the one hand, Helm says, Swinburne has argued that there is good evidence for God's existence and holds that persons have as an intellectual aim to ground their belief in adequate evidence as firmly as they can. But, on the other hand, as Helm just reasoned, the more evidence one has for God's existence, the less room there is for meritorious trust and faith. And this sounds, if not paradoxical, as Helm says, at least slightly strange.²⁸⁴ Helm calls views of faith similar to Swinburne's "evidential deficiency views". According to him, such views see faith and especially trust as making up for lack of evidence by adopting a degree of certitude not warranted by the evidence. These views Helm contrasts with the one he favours and calls "the evidential proportion view", which he takes, in essence, as proportioning the strength of faith and trust with the strength of belief: strong belief, strong faith; weak belief, weak faith.²⁸⁵

There may be some truth to Helm's interpretation. Swinburne seems to have a tendency to think that some kind of evidential deficiency is a prerequisite for trust and hence faith. This is illustrated, for example, by his definition of trust, as it speaks about acting on an assumption when the evidence to some extent counts against the assumption. But despite this, it seems to me that Helm's critique is not wholly convincing. For it does not seem to make much sense to say, like Helm does, that the stronger belief one has, the less room there is for one to exercise meritorious trust and faith. It is not clear how the strength of a person's belief could exclude or reduce her possibilities to seek to do the actions constituting trust in God. Consider the following example. Suppose X has a weak Christian belief whereas Y's belief is a strong one. Helm's claim is that unlike X, for Y there is not much room to trust in God. But how could that be? It seems that quite regardless of the strength of their beliefs, X and Y have equal opportunities to choose whether to trust in God, that is, whether to seek to do the actions constitutive of trust. And if both X and Y decide to do these actions with equal determination, it seems that their trust in God is equal and similarly meritorious, as they have made the same choice and do the same actions.

²⁸³ Helm 2000, 144.

²⁸⁴ Helm 2000, 145.

²⁸⁵ Helm 2000, 18, 139. Helm has reservations regarding Swinburne's account of trust, too: "But is trust in God a case of a morally good action, perhaps the paradigm case of such an action, as he [Swinburne] maintains, and as he needs to maintain if he is to link faith and merit as robustly as he does? Is there not a critical moral difference between trust as the basis of the action of doing something and trust as the basis for receiving something? And is not the basic religious stance of trustfulness, at least in Christianity, that of one who trusts he will receive, rather than trusting as the basis of doing something and so of gaining merit thereby?" Helm 2000, 150-151.

As I see it, all of this is in line with Swinburne's views. He seems to hold that anything less than absolute certainty that there is a God who will provide for us what we want or need requires exercising trust in God.²⁸⁶ This illustrates that in Swinburne's view trusting is actually compatible with firm as well as weak belief. So, Helm's critique seems unconvincing. Then again, it must be conceded that with strong belief, in contrast to weak belief, it is presumably easier to make the voluntary choice to trust God. To give a crude example, if a person firmly believes that there is a God worthy of worship and He is a punisher of bad actions, she would not likely have much temptation to choose other things than to trust in God and live a life of faith, in general. However, things may be otherwise as regards a weak believer. For her the temptation to do other things than trust God may be substantial. Perhaps in this specific sense a strong belief makes the choice to trust in God "less free" and thus somewhat less meritorious.²⁸⁷ Whether this is what Helm really intends by his critique is not obvious, but the critique can be anyway re-construed in this way.

Supposing then that this criticism is adequate, we can say that having a strong belief somewhat weakens the merit one gains by exercising trust. Does this mean that in the Swinburnean outlook having a strong belief weakens the overall merit one gains by having faith? Not necessarily, for that will also depend on how the belief is acquired. If a strong belief is acquired via honest investigation, one gains merit by holding that belief, as Swinburne argued (see section 2.1.2.).²⁸⁸ This probably compensates for the loss of merit strong belief allegedly implies for trust. Helm actually acknowledges a comparable possibility, which to me seems to vitiate his reservations about Swinburne's view on the merit of faith.²⁸⁹

On the other hand, if a person's strong Christian belief is based on, say, a powerful religious experience, which she was not expecting at all, her holding the belief is not meritorious according to Swinburne's analysis: the person has not done anything to acquire the belief, but the belief is simply forced on her. We may suppose that for such a person the temptation to do other things than trust in God is quite low, and so her trust in God is less meritorious in the discussed sense. This is plausibly a case of a person whose faith is minimally

²⁸⁶ See Swinburne 2005, 146. Consequently, a person who acts on the absolute certainty that there is a God who will provide for her what she needs is not trusting in God but doing something else, perhaps showing her gratitude to God. One could say that in Swinburne's view there is no need to trust in God in Heaven. Cf. Helm 2000, 144.

²⁸⁷ This is actually a Swinburnean point. He holds that God's existence not being immediately evident and firmly believed from the outset makes it possible for persons to make the genuine choice whether to pursue good or evil purposes, which is an intrinsically good thing. To illustrate with the previously mentioned crude example, if persons knew from the outset that there is a God worthy of worship and He is a punisher of bad actions, they probably would not have much temptation to do wrong (or so Swinburne apparently thinks), and in this sense their choice to do good would be less free, as it would be quite a natural and easy thing to do. But if God's existence is not immediately obvious to persons, they have the genuine choice to pursue good as well as evil purposes: without a strong fear of punishment, they presumably now also have a real temptation to do evil. Swinburne notes that in this case among the good choices is starting to investigate whether God exists and what God's possible exhortations to us might be. See Swinburne 1998, 203-212. See also Swinburne 1979, 211-212.

²⁸⁸ Cf. Swinburne 2005, 105-106.

²⁸⁹ See Helm 2000, 146-147.

meritorious in the Swinburnean scheme. But the person's faith is nonetheless meritorious, as she has voluntarily chosen to trust in God, and this is a choice she could have withdrawn and still can withdraw, though her temptation to do so may be negligible.

2.1.4 CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

In summary, Swinburne holds that having Christian faith primarily means seeking certain goals, namely, the worship of God and the salvation of oneself and others. He maintains that seeking these goals amounts to doing the actions that love of God would lead one to do, which in his view is also equal to trusting in God. This is the practical aspect of Swinburne's Pragmatist view of faith. In his view this aspect is largely voluntary and exemplifying it deserves merit. If one is not prepared or disposed to do good acts, one cannot have salvific faith.

In Swinburne's view a necessary condition for instantiating the practical aspect of faith is not strong belief but a so-called weak belief, that is, the belief that the Christian creed is more probable than any relevant rival creed. Thus, in our terminology, a weak belief is a sub-doxastic, "less-than-strong-belief" attitude (see section 1.1.2.). Weak belief forms the cognitive aspect of Swinburne's account of faith. Swinburne maintains that the belief required for having faith is formed involuntarily in response to evidence, and in his view it is not possible to believe without evidence. Swinburne claims that holding a Christian belief can be nonetheless voluntary in a sense and thus meritorious, too. This is the situation if the belief is acquired as a result of voluntarily started adequate investigation, in which case the belief is, for want of a better term, indirectly voluntary.

I find many aspects of Swinburne's view convincing. It does seem that believing is tied to evidence, and hence the cognitive aspect of faith, insofar as it consists of a belief of any strength, is not directly voluntary (for further discussion see section 3.1.3.). In contrast, the practical aspect of faith, as it is a matter of practical action, is naturally conceived of as a voluntary choice and conduct. But where I deviate from Swinburne's view is that I do not think that a weak belief is a necessary requirement for having a sort of tentative faith, since in my view epistemic-wise still weaker—and non-contrastive—propositional attitudes suffice for such faith (see section 4.5.). Swinburne would likely disagree, as he emphasises that faith amounts to pursuing certain specific goals, and such a pursuit is not in his view possible without the weak belief. But Swinburne's view according to which faith is a goal-oriented action, which is also meritorious, may for some look like an objectionable view of faith. In the following section we will analyse a model of faith which is in this way against Swinburne's account.

2.2 PLANTINGA'S AQUINAS/CALVIN MODEL OF FAITH

In Plantinga we find quite a different view of faith to that of Swinburne. Plantinga maintains that his model reflects Calvin's and Aquinas' accounts; hence the name the Aquinas/Calvin (A/C) model. He holds that the kernel of the model is captured by Calvin's summary of faith:

[faith is] firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.²⁹⁰

This description already illuminates the central features of Plantinga's model of faith. Faith is produced by the Holy Spirit, and it includes a cognitive and an evaluative-affective aspect: it is certain knowledge both "revealed to our minds" and "sealed upon our hearts".²⁹¹ Unlike Swinburne, Plantinga does not focus on the practical aspect of faith (for a discussion of his view, see section 1.1.2.). In addition, contrary to Swinburne, Plantinga gives a central role to the Holy Spirit in a person's acquisition of faith.

Plantinga presents his model of faith in his *Warranted Christian Belief* (2000), which is the last book of his trilogy on epistemology.²⁹² The topic in these books is the notion of warrant, which for Plantinga is the property that turns true belief into knowledge. He holds that warrant is best conceived in terms of proper function:

a belief has warrant, for a person, if it is produced by her cognitive faculties functioning properly in a congenial epistemic environment according to a design plan successfully aimed at the production of true or verisimilitudinous belief.²⁹³

In *Warranted Christian Belief* Plantinga's aim is to show how theistic and Christian beliefs, when held in a basic way, could have warrant sufficient enough to constitute knowledge. This is where the A/C model or, actually, two interrelated A/C models enter the picture. Plantinga holds that theistic belief, which has to do with a general knowledge of God and some of God's qualities, is arrived at by a different route than a specifically Christian belief, which concerns such things as the Trinity, incarnation, atonement, and the like. Consequently, Plantinga's first (plain) A/C model tries to explain the warrant of theistic beliefs, whereas the second extended A/C model accounts for the warrant of Christian belief, too. It is the extended model that relates to faith proper.²⁹⁴

"Model" is Plantinga's technical terminology, and he claims four things about the A/C models. First, the models are in his view epistemically possible:

²⁹⁰ Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, III, ii, 7, 551. See Plantinga 2000, 201-202.

²⁹¹ Plantinga 2000, 168. Cf. Bishop 2007, 104-105.

²⁹² The other books are Plantinga 1993a; 1993b.

²⁹³ Plantinga 1993a, 237. See also Plantinga 2000, xi. Kvanvig (ed.) 1996, for example, addresses Plantinga's theory of warrant from different perspectives. One might note that here, too, is a difference between Swinburne and Plantinga. While Swinburne basically holds that S's belief that p is epistemically justified if S has "internal" access to adequate evidence for p, Plantinga maintains that S's belief is epistemically justified or, more precisely, warranted, if p is produced "externally" by S's properly functioning cognitive faculty. Swinburne's theory of epistemic justification is an internalist one, while Plantinga's is externalist. On the internalist/externalist distinction in epistemology, see e.g. Pappas 2005.

²⁹⁴ Plantinga 2000, 168.

they are consistent with what we know, that is, they can be true. Secondly, Plantinga holds that there are no cogent objections to the models' truth that are not also cogent objections to the truth of theistic or Christian belief. Third, while Plantinga believes that the models are true or at least verisimilitudinous, he does not claim to show that they are that. This is for the reason that the models entail the truth of theism and Christianity, and Plantinga says that he does not know "how to do something one could sensibly call 'showing' that either of these is true". Fourth, Plantinga maintains that there are other models similar to the A/C models, and if Christian belief is true, in his view one of these models is very likely also true.²⁹⁵

The way Plantinga conceives the nature of the A/C models is linked to his epistemological project in *Warranted Christian Belief*.²⁹⁶ But what we are interested in is not Plantinga's epistemology but his account of faith and the voluntariness of faith. So, though it is good to be aware of Plantinga's claims about the nature of the A/C models, for our needs it suffices to conceive of them as pieces of philosophical theology. They are Plantinga's attempts to elaborate theological ideas with philosophical methods.²⁹⁷ In fact, this understanding of the models seems to be compatible with Plantinga's claims about the character of the models. In what follows, then, I will first survey the (plain) A/C model, after which the extended A/C model is scrutinised.

2.2.1 NATURAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD BY *SENSUS DIVINITATIS*: THE A/C MODEL

Natural knowledge of God is readily associated with natural theology, which is the enterprise of trying to gain knowledge about God's existence and character without the aid of special revelation. Generally, natural theology comes in the form of seeking to offer arguments for God's existence, which start from some purportedly shared public evidence.²⁹⁸ Swinburne is an exemplar of a natural theologian (see section 2.1.1.).²⁹⁹ Plantinga, however, does not link a natural knowledge of God to natural theology. He actually rejects the necessity of natural theology for faith, as is typical in the Reformed tradition he espouses.³⁰⁰ In its place, following Calvin's outline Plantinga argues that all of us have so-called *sensus divinitatis*, a sense of divinity, which according to

²⁹⁵ Plantinga 2000, 168-170.

²⁹⁶ See e.g. Plantinga 2000, 169, 190-191. For an evaluation of Plantinga's religious epistemology see e.g. Beilby 2005.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Plantinga 2000, xiii-xiv.

²⁹⁸ Cf. Beilby 2005, 117.

²⁹⁹ See e.g. Swinburne 2005, 91-92.

³⁰⁰ James Beilby has distinguished three Reformed objections to natural theology. First, due to sin's effect on humans' intellect, human reasoning is incapable of attaining reliable knowledge of God. Second, because human reason is depraved in this way, knowledge of God must come "from the outside", that is, from Scripture alone (*Sola Scriptura*). Third, since many people have a robust faith but no arguments for the propositions of their faith, this must mean that the arguments of natural theology are not required for having faith, and so they are irrelevant, perhaps even injurious. See Beilby 2005, 118-119. As we shall see in due course, Plantinga emphasises the noetic effects of sin and holds that arguments are not required for having faith. However, he does not claim that the arguments are of necessity injurious. For a discussion, see e.g. Beilby 2005, 119-124; Plantinga 1991; 2001; 2007.

Plantinga's interpretation is a cognitive faculty whereby humans can acquire theistic beliefs. He maintains that this capacity for knowledge of God is part of each person's original cognitive makeup.³⁰¹

Plantinga holds that *sensus divinitatis* is a disposition to form theistic beliefs in circumstances that trigger the sense, for example, when one is marvelling at nature or feeling guilt or in danger. In his view, these circumstances form the occasion on which the beliefs arise, the beliefs being, for example, that God is great, God disapproves of my doings, or God helps me if he sees fit. Plantinga accentuates that beliefs formed by *sensus divinitatis* are not inferred from the circumstances but occasioned by them. Plantinga says, for example, that awareness of guilt is not an evidential basis for a theistic argument of the form: I am guilty; so there must be a God. Rather, he holds, a feeling of guilt is the circumstance where one finds oneself with the belief that God disapproves (and exists).³⁰²

Plantinga holds that beliefs produced by *sensus divinitatis* resemble perception, memory, and *a priori* beliefs. All of these beliefs are in his view basic in the sense that they are not accepted on the evidential basis of other propositions. The general view here is akin to that of Swinburne on basic propositions and beliefs (see section 2.1.1.). For example, in Plantinga's view seeing flowers in bloom or remembering eating pancakes are not premises for simple arguments to the conclusion that, in fact, the flowers are in bloom or that pancakes were eaten. Instead, he maintains, the beliefs arise spontaneously in appropriate circumstances. And, Plantinga says, the same goes for beliefs about God when they are formed by *sensus divinitatis*: they are not inferred but arise spontaneously in the circumstances that trigger the operation of the sense. In short, theistic beliefs are formed in a basic way and hence they are basic beliefs.³⁰³

One might from the outset query whether we could possibly have the sense of divinity on the grounds that it is not part of common knowledge that we have that kind of faculty as it is that we have such natural faculties as perception, intellect, and memory. Plantinga holds, however, that a person who acquires theistic beliefs via *sensus divinitatis* need not have any idea about the source of the belief or that there is such a faculty as *sensus divinitatis*. Similarly, Plantinga holds, most of us do not have well-developed ideas about the source of our *a priori* beliefs. Furthermore, Plantinga argues that persons do not hold theistic beliefs on the basis of the following sort of argument: this belief seems to be a product of *sensus divinitatis*; *sensus*

³⁰¹ Plantinga 2000, 170, 172, 180. I will not here consider whether Plantinga reflects Calvin's thought adequately, but some remarks can still be made. For example, according to Paul Helm's interpretation, Calvin held that the *sensus divinitatis* yields both epistemic and moral knowledge. Helm 1998, 88. Plantinga, however, seems to somewhat one-sidedly emphasise only the epistemic side. Furthermore, whereas Plantinga, as we will see, sees the *sensus divinitatis* as causing specifically theistic beliefs, Helm gives the impression that for Calvin the divine awareness produced by the faculty is broader and more elusive, and that it can thus be interpreted in many ways, and hence, I suppose, non-theistic interpretations cannot be excluded. Helm 1998, 97. Then again, see Helm 1998, 98-99. For further discussion, see Beversluis 1995; Jeffreys 1997; Helm 1998.

³⁰² Plantinga 2000, 173-175.

³⁰³ Plantinga 2000, 175-176.

divinitatis is a reliable belief-producing mechanism; thus, the belief is probably true. On the contrary, Plantinga argues that theistic beliefs are not typically held on the basis of any argument at all: they are basic beliefs.³⁰⁴

If *sensus divinitatis* is part of each person's cognitive faculties, why then are theistic beliefs not much more widely held? Plantinga argues that prior to faith (discussed in the next section) natural knowledge of God is weakened by human kind's sinful state, which has both cognitive and affective consequences. As to the latter, our affections are directed towards wrong objects—we love ourselves and not our neighbours and God, for example.³⁰⁵ The cognitive effects of sin, on the other hand, have to do primarily with our knowledge of God. "Were it not for sin and its effects," Plantinga argues, "God's presence and glory would be as obvious and uncontroversial to us all as the presence of other minds, physical objects, and the past."³⁰⁶ But because of sin, *sensus divinitatis* has been damaged just like, say, one's hearing can be damaged due to an illness. In addition, Plantinga maintains that sin can cause us to resist, suppress, and distort the deliverances of the faculty. But despite this, Plantinga holds that *sensus divinitatis* remains partially functional in most of us, even though in some it may not work at all.³⁰⁷

As things stand, it is evident that, according to Plantinga's model, it is not up to persons' volitional activity whether they have theistic beliefs. Either a person's *sensus divinitatis* works to some extent or sin wholly prevents its functioning. Similarly, either a person's vision works at least partly or the person is blind and cannot but lack visual beliefs. On the other hand, it may be possible that a person's sense of divinity is partly working, but sin causes her to suppress its productions or interpret them incorrectly. Might a person in this case fight sin by her willpower and pay closer attention to the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis*? Plantinga does not seem to think so. In his view only God can help humans in their sinful situation.³⁰⁸

So, in Plantinga's model sin explains why all of us do not spontaneously come to hold theistic beliefs in a basic way when, say, marvelling at nature. But that some persons do acquire theistic beliefs in this way is perhaps not an issue. To put this point in Swinburnian terms, perhaps awareness of God's presence which grounds the basic belief that there is a God can arise spontaneously in such circumstances as Plantinga describes.³⁰⁹ However, it is another question how often in such situations theistic belief is, in fact, acquired in a basic way rather than by way of an inference. Plantinga's claim is that, according to his model, one does not make "a quick and dirty" or

³⁰⁴ Plantinga appears to hold that lacking argumentative support for theistic belief is no deficiency. In his view, it is from an epistemic viewpoint better to hold theistic beliefs as basic rather than as inferred. Plantinga 2000, 179, 264. One might still ask whether it would be a good thing if one could offer, for example, evidential support for the premises of the above argument concerning the reliability (and existence) of *sensus divinitatis*.

³⁰⁵ Plantinga 2000, 184, 205, 208.

³⁰⁶ Plantinga 2000, 214.

³⁰⁷ Plantinga 2000, 205, 214-215.

³⁰⁸ Plantinga 2000, 205.

³⁰⁹ See Swinburne 2005, 88-89. See also section 2.1.1..

“ridiculously weak” inference from, say, the grandeur of the mountains or the night sky to the existence of God.³¹⁰ As a retort one might simply question this assertion, as Keith Mascord, for example, does.

Mascord’s fundamental critique is that Plantinga’s scenarios of theistic belief formation are best construed in inferential rather than non-inferential terms, though he adds that the inference involved need not be a very conscious one. Mascord argues that otherwise it is hard to identify the nature of the connection between the experiences Plantinga describes and the resulting theistic belief.³¹¹ Suppose, then, that Mascord is right and that theistic beliefs are typically arrived at through an explicit or implicit inference, in which case they are non-basic. Would this undermine Plantinga’s model?

Perhaps some epistemological difficulties would arise, at the very least.³¹² But, as Plantinga remarks, his model could be developed in such a way that the role of *sensus divinitatis* is to enable persons to see the truth of the premise for a quick theistic argument, such as the heavens can be beautiful only if God has created them.³¹³ In this case, the resulting theistic belief would by all appearances be non-basic (though the crucial premise might be held in a basic way). Questions about basicity also concern Plantinga’s view on specifically Christian belief formation, and it will be addressed further in that connection.

2.2.2 FAITH AS A WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: THE EXTENDED A/C MODEL

Plantinga maintains that humankind has fallen into sin, and this has alienated humans from God both cognitively and affectively. According to him, sin makes it impossible for humans to save themselves from this plight. Following traditional Christianity, Plantinga argues that God has offered humans salvation in Jesus Christ, and he has informed humans of this scheme of salvation in the Bible. Subsequently, God has sent the Holy Spirit to produce the gift of faith in humans. By virtue of the Holy Spirit’s activity humans come to believe the specifically Christian propositions. This is the proper cognitive aspect in Plantinga’s model of faith. In addition, Plantinga holds that the Holy Spirit cures the damaged *sensus divinitatis* and distorted and disoriented affections. The corrected affections, such as loving God and one’s neighbours (see section 1.1.2.), form the evaluative-affective aspect of Plantinga’s model of faith.³¹⁴

The way the Holy Spirit produces Christian beliefs and the right affections is akin to the way *sensus divinitatis* produces theistic beliefs. I will here focus on the belief-side of the process, though it is important to remember that the

³¹⁰ Plantinga 2000, 175-176. More explicitly, the argument could be something like the following: the mountains are grand; only God could have created such grand mountains; therefore, there must be a God. This would likely be some form of teleological argument for God’s existence.

³¹¹ Mascord 2006, 129, 132. For further discussion, see Mascord 2006, ch. 7.

³¹² See e.g. Mascord 2006, 144-145.

³¹³ Plantinga 2000, 176.

³¹⁴ Plantinga 2000, 205-206, 269, 280-281.

process also includes the renewal of the affections.³¹⁵ Plantinga argues that there are three things involved in a person's coming to believe the "great things of the gospel": Scripture (the divine teaching), the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit, and faith, the belief that results. To put it briefly, Plantinga maintains that encountering the Scripture in some way or another forms the occasion for Christian beliefs to arise in a basic way, that is, non-inferentially, through the activity of the Holy Spirit.³¹⁶

From a person's point of view, Plantinga holds, reading the Scripture or something presenting it or hearing the gospel preached brings about a sudden conviction that what is said is true and that it is from God. Plantinga mentions that the conviction can also arise slowly and the process can actually go "in a thousand ways", but in each case there is the phenomenon of being convinced in response to the Christian teaching.³¹⁷ It seems that in Plantinga's model the Holy Spirit works incognito: when a person acquires convinced Christian beliefs, she does not discern that the Holy Spirit produces the beliefs; that is not part of the overall experience. One might ask, though, why the Holy Spirit does not work openly.

Plantinga maintains that for the person of faith in paradigmatic instances Christian beliefs, like theistic beliefs, are conviction-wise on a par with her memory and *a priori* beliefs.³¹⁸ But, he admits, in typical cases the degree of Christian belief will be less than maximal, and it can vary from time to time.³¹⁹ This seems problematic, however. To put the issue in Swinburnian terms again, it seems odd that the Holy Spirit's activity would result in a person having basic Christian beliefs (or propositions) whose prior probability is relatively low and change over time.³²⁰ Should not the Holy Spirit always produce, and presumably also sustain, very convinced Christian beliefs in persons of faith?

The view that in Plantinga's model Christian belief comes in different degrees among persons James Beilby labels as the variability of belief (VB) problem. Beilby holds that one answer to this problem would be to argue that some persons have received a weakened version of the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit. But, Beilby maintains, this is unsatisfactory *inter alia* for the reason that it is hard to explain why God would mute the effectiveness of his chosen means to produce faith in persons.³²¹ Then again, perhaps the VB problem is not so much due to God as to human flaws. This is the stance Beilby prefers, as he holds that the VB problem is best explained for Plantinga by the noetic effects of sin: they continue to some extent to affect the believer even

³¹⁵ For further discussion on the affections, see Plantinga 2000, ch. 9.

³¹⁶ Plantinga 2000, 249-251, 258-259.

³¹⁷ Plantinga 2000, 250-251.

³¹⁸ Plantinga 2000, 264.

³¹⁹ Plantinga 2000, 264 n. 43. See also Beilby 2007, 146.

³²⁰ Swinburne 2005, 18-19.

³²¹ Beilby 2007, 154-155.

after the Holy Spirit's renewal.³²² This, however, invites a further question: why does not the Holy Spirit remove sin altogether from the believer?³²³

Besides the VB problem Beilby pays attention to another issue in Plantinga's view of the formation of Christian beliefs, which is influenced by Keith Lehrer's critique. The problem can be put as follows. Suppose a person reads for the first time about Christian teaching and as a result is suddenly (or eventually) convinced that what she read is true. According to Plantinga, the resulting beliefs are in this case formed in a basic way; they are not inferred from, say, the supposed reliability of Scripture. But for this reason from the person's viewpoint the conviction involved in her belief seems to come to her in an abnormal way from nowhere or, as Beilby puts it, from "out of the blue".³²⁴ And, Beilby continues, by virtue of this fact the person, if reflective, would discount the belief.³²⁵ That is, the person would not believe after reflection. (This criticism may also apply to some instances of theistic belief formation which Plantinga describes.)

The stated problem is probably not insuperable for Plantinga. In response he could say something along the following lines, for example. Granted that the person of the above scenario might at first find her new beliefs puzzling, she can and should learn from other persons of faith (like Plantinga) that the way she has acquired the beliefs is not at all awkward but just what is to be expected, and so the person should not find her beliefs mystifying and out of context.³²⁶ But be that as it may, this "beliefs coming from 'out of the blue'" problem would not arise if one held that persons' Christian beliefs are typically non-basic and thus arrived at by an inference, say, from the purported reliability of the Scripture or of the proclaimer thereof, whether an individual

³²² Beilby 2007, 155.

³²³ Beilby also goes over and rejects two other possible answers to the VB problem. According to the first explanation, those who exemplify the VB problem have not, in fact, received the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit. Such persons' Christian beliefs, Beilby says, "are the products of cognitive faculties that are still wholly mired in sin". While Beilby holds that this is logically and theologically possible, he maintains that it cannot be the solution to the VB problem for Plantinga, as he holds that doubt is not wholly excluded by the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit. The second explanation to the VB problem refers to the "epistemic distance" between a transcendent God and the person of faith: this distance can somehow affect the strength of the person's belief. Beilby holds that this answer to the VB problem is not viable, because Plantinga argues that epistemic distance is no barrier to human knowledge of God. Furthermore, Beilby notes, invoking epistemic distance is excluded by Plantinga's Calvinist soteriology according to which God is necessarily the cause of Christian belief in persons. Beilby 2007, 154.

³²⁴ Were the Holy Spirit to work openly instead of incognito, this problem would not necessarily arise. For if a person from her viewpoint experienced the Holy Spirit's activity, that would be a kind of religious experience, which could presumably ground Christian beliefs.

³²⁵ Beilby 2007, 151-153. See Lehrer 1996. Linda Zagzebski has made a similar objection against George Mavrodes, whose view bears some resemblance to that of Plantinga. In Mavrodes's example God inserts theistic belief in a person while she is sleeping. See Mavrodes 1988, 37-38. Zagzebski argues that "the Mavrodes case violates one of the strictures on epistemological methodology [...] by not giving sufficient weight to the self-reflectiveness of human nature. A self-reflective person ought to worry if he wakes up with a firm belief of some sort with no memory of how he got the belief or how it might be justified. [...] Even if he cannot help believing at that moment, he ought to rethink the matter later and worry about it." Zagzebski 1993, 218.

³²⁶ Compare this to the following remark by Plantinga: "You have considered how it [that is, the acquired belief] fits in with your other beliefs, engaged in requisite seeking for defeaters, considered the objections that you have encountered, compared notes with the right people, and so on. Clearly, on the model (and even apart from the model), someone who accepts the Christian beliefs in question can easily meet these conditions." Plantinga 2000, 255. Cf. Mascord 2006, 140.

or a community. Such a way to acquire beliefs is typical, and it gives, so to speak, a proper context for acquiring and holding belief.

As already suggested, one can query whether Christian beliefs are typically basic and acquired accordingly just like one can question the basicity of theistic beliefs (see section 2.1.2.). This is a fairly common critique of Plantinga's view.³²⁷ For example, Swinburne thinks that many Christians believe "the great things of the gospel" because they have heard primitive versions of arguments for them, that is, they have "heard arguments from the pulpit that if God is love, He must be triune, or that there were many witnesses who saw the risen Christ", and they believe that arguments like these fit together to yield a coherent Christian understanding of the world.³²⁸

To take another critique of the purported basicity of Christian belief, in reference to the works of Esther Meek and Paul Helm, Keith Mascord argues that frequently influential in a person's coming to hold Christian belief is the belief's perceived plausibility or accuracy, that is, its ability to profoundly integrate already existing beliefs, suspicions, and possibilities. Mascord holds that this is best seen as a process involving "inference to the best explanation" (cf. abductive reasoning). In the case at hand this means, in brief, that a person comes to hold Christian beliefs by inferring, not necessarily very consciously, that they make the best explanation of the way she has conceived diverse worldly phenomena. Here beliefs about the phenomena are the person's evidence for the propositions of faith, and the resulting beliefs are thus held in a non-basic way.³²⁹

As a rejoinder Plantinga could, of course, define his model. For example, he could argue that even when from a person's viewpoint it looks like she has acquired Christian belief inferentially, the belief is, in fact, in some way due to the promptings of the Holy Spirit—after all, the Holy Spirit works in disguise (cf. Plantinga's similar suggestion concerning the role of the *sensus divinitatis* in section 2.2.1.). Something like this is actually Mascord's own position.³³⁰ One could put the point at issue in the following way: perhaps holding Christian belief in a basic way is not the only possible indication of the belief's being instigated by the Holy Spirit, as Plantinga seems to think, since the Holy Spirit can also be at work when a person comes to hold Christian belief by way of inference.

Why does Plantinga hesitate to include in his model non-basic Christian beliefs as promptings of the Holy Spirit? His reasons for this are plausibly both epistemological and theological. Regarding the former, basicity is a crucial

³²⁷ See e.g. Beilby 2007; Fales 2004; Mascord 2006; Swinburne 2001a.

³²⁸ Swinburne 2001a, 211.

³²⁹ Mascord 2006, 153. See Helm 1992; Meek 1997. For further discussion and critique, see Mascord 2006, ch. 8. Swinburne's brief remark on theism's credibility bears a resemblance to Mascord's view: "It may be that not many theists believe on the basis of argument, though my view is that quite a number do believe on the basis of the crudest form arguments that theism 'makes sense of the world'." Swinburne 2001a, 207.

³³⁰ "My own opinion is that the Holy Spirit is involved in and through argument and evidence, and by other means as well. He does not, at least typically, by-pass the ordinary workings of human cognitive faculties. Rather, he works through and by them." Mascord 2006, 162. See also Swinburne's rather thin view about the need for grace in coming to hold Christian beliefs in section 2.1.2..

feature in Plantinga's work, as he has sought to argue that theistic and Christian beliefs can have warrant when held in a basic way (that is, they are properly basic). As to theological motives, some of Plantinga's remarks against historical investigation as an argumentative route to yield Christian belief are illuminating. First of all, Plantinga seems to have an inclination to think that because of sin, coming to hold Christian belief necessarily requires God's activity; the belief cannot be acquired by such human efforts as historical investigation (unaided by God's help, one must add). Plantinga also holds that acquiring Christian belief via historical investigation would not entail the change of affections which faith involves—though, one might add, it does not rule that out either. Still further, Plantinga appears to think that making a case for the central claims of Christianity would be possible for only a few people after great effort, and the resulting belief would still be “uncertain and shot through with falsehood”, which in his view is not compatible with the ideal firm knowledge that faith involves.³³¹

There may be diverse evaluations about the credibility of Plantinga's claims, but many disagree with the last point, at the very least. They hold that while faith may ideally involve firm knowledge, it is feasible with quite a weak epistemic attitude, too. A view like this was already defended by Swinburne (see section 2.1.3.), and in chapter 4 we will survey similar accounts further. Even Plantinga affirmed that Christian belief is typically of less than maximal certainty. In a personal response to Beilby he admits that “for whatever reason, the deliverances of the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit seem to come in all different degrees of strength”.³³² Might the degree of strength be in some instances nothing more than that involved in hoping (for discussion, see sections 4.2. and 4.5.)?

2.2.3 THE WILL IN THE EXTENDED A/C MODEL

There does not seem to be much room for volitional activity in Plantinga's scheme of the acquisition of faith or conversion, as one might say. One cannot but read the Scripture or listen to it proclaimed and except that sooner or later one acquires the conviction and the affections that constitute the faith in question. So, from a person's viewpoint acquiring Plantingian faith is largely a passive matter. Presumably sustaining this faith or “acting it out” (cf. the practical aspect of faith) requires the will, though for theological reasons Plantinga may hold that even this cannot come about without the continual help of the Holy Spirit (who, say, moves the person's will towards good).

The Calvinist views underlying Plantinga's model of faith also accentuate its involuntary nature. Part of Plantinga's theological view is that in our sinful state we are unable to save ourselves, and thus faith has to be a gift from God. The Holy Spirit produces faith in humans who are merely the recipients of this

³³¹ Plantinga 2000, 269-270. See also Beilby 2007, 134, 139, 142.

³³² Beilby 2007, 154-155.

gift.³³³ It is interesting to note that in this respect, among other things, Plantinga sees his view as being like Aquinas'. He interprets Aquinas as arguing that faith is caused by God, who moves persons inwardly by grace.³³⁴ Plantinga's interpretation of Aquinas and his model of faith are not far from Jenkins's supernatural externalist interpretation of Aquinas (see section 2.1.2.). However, unlike Aquinas, Plantinga does not give the impression that faith is meritorious. That would anyway fit poorly with his Calvinist views.

It is plain that not all who have encountered Christian teaching suddenly or in the course of time convert to the sort of faith Plantinga describes. For this reason it would be suitable for Plantinga to claim, in accordance with Calvinism, that the Holy Spirit confers faith only to some predestined humans. This is Paul Moser's interpretation of Plantinga, and he is critical towards this view. Moser's claim seems to be that God being selective as to who gains faith and salvation is incompatible with the teaching of the New Testament as well as with God's moral perfection, which involves genuine love of all humans. Moser argues that God has offered the gift of faith to everyone, and humans can freely embrace or reject the gift. In Moser's view, having faith involves loving God, and even God cannot cause a person to love others.³³⁵

While Plantinga seems to have a tendency to affirm the doctrine of predestination,³³⁶ on some occasions he cautiously suggests a role for the will in the acquisition of faith, which is actually similar to the one Moser described. Plantinga says that the gift of faith is "given to anyone who is willing to accept it"³³⁷ and that:

it is part of much traditional Christian teaching to hold that a necessary condition of my receiving the gift of faith is my acquiescing, being willing to accept the gift, being prepared to receive it. There is a contribution to this process that I myself must make, a contribution that I can withhold.³³⁸

Consequently, there may after all be a volitional aspect in Plantinga's model of faith. This aspect does not seem to amount to any kind of will to believe—that would be anyway a problematic idea—but appears to be some sort of rather vague readiness to receive the gift of faith in contrast to being reluctant to have it.³³⁹ But this seems to leave unexplained why some persons who by all appearances are willing to receive the gift do not receive it (cf. the problem of divine hiddenness).

2.2.4 CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

In sum, Plantinga maintains that faith is caused by the Holy Spirit, and it ideally involves a strong Christian belief as the cognitive aspect of faith and the right affections as the evaluative-affective aspect of faith. Beliefs formed by the

³³³ Plantinga 2000, 205, 269.

³³⁴ Plantinga 2000, 249.

³³⁵ Moser 2010, 132-133. In this respect Moser refers to Meadors 2006.

³³⁶ See e.g. Plantinga 2000, 253-254

³³⁷ Plantinga 2000, 244.

³³⁸ Plantinga 2000, 257.

³³⁹ See Beilby 2007, 157.

Holy Spirit as well as by the repaired *sensus divinitatis* are in Plantinga's view acquired non-inferentially and thus held as basic. Plantinga maintains that because of sin faith has to be a gift from God; from a person's viewpoint coming to have Plantingian faith is also a passive event. Still, Plantinga suggests that the acquisition of faith may be subsequent to the willingness to have it. This is the volitional aspect of his model of faith.

What is more, Plantinga's model does not exclude the potential voluntariness of seeking faith, that is, reciting the Scripture and listening to it proclaimed, which supposedly occasion or assist the formation of faith. Perhaps this can be seen as part of the willingness to accept the gift of faith. Still further, Plantinga's model does not eliminate the possibility that sustaining faith and "acting out" one's faith in practical action is something that requires the will. Then again, Plantinga might claim that because of sin these acts necessarily require the aid of the Holy Spirit. In this case it would be unclear whether the actions are ultimately up to a person's own voluntary efforts.

As we saw, Plantinga's view according to which Christian or theistic beliefs are typically non-inferentially attained and basically held has been questioned. I find this critique quite plausible. Presumably some persons hold Christian beliefs on inferential grounds, as Swinburne and Mascord accentuated. But otherwise, Plantinga has drawn attention to important issues about the nature of Christian faith. If traditional Christian insights are taken at face value, as Plantinga seeks to do, it seems relevant to somehow take into account the view that faith is due to the supernatural grace of God and the promptings of the Holy Spirit. As regards this topic, one Christian perspective, which is more inclusive than that of Plantinga, could be the following.

According to John Duns Scotus, as Swinburne describes it, each person of faith should be of the view that they have the right sort of "infused faith", which is faith completed by divine grace. And they should be of this view, Duns Scotus held, although no person of faith can know with certainty whether they have infused faith or mere "acquired faith", which is faith that is arrived at by the mere use of natural faculties. Apparently, the difference cannot in Duns Scotus's view be known, because from a person's internal viewpoint infused and acquired faith look exactly alike.³⁴⁰ In keeping with the basics of this view, one might suggest that perhaps each person of faith should think of her having faith as an indication of having received divine grace, and each person should think like this regardless of how from their internal viewpoint they conceive their faith being acquired, that is, regardless of, say, whether they see their Christian belief as being formed in a basic way or via an inference.

Lastly, I would like to end this chapter with a comparison between Swinburne's and Plantinga's views of faith on a general level, which illuminates the topic of voluntariness of faith from a broader point of view.

³⁴⁰ See Swinburne 2005, 119-120. The view that a person cannot know with certainty whether her faith is supernaturally or just naturally caused was common in High Scholasticism. Aquinas, for example, espoused and elaborated it. For further discussion, see Järveläinen 2000, ch. 3.2..

Swinburne has drawn a distinction between “hard” and “liberal” positions on Christian doctrinal issues. The distinction is oversimplified and very crude, but yet I find it illuminating. So, according to Swinburne, for the consistent hardliner:

every man suffers from a total depravity, guilt for his own sins and the sins of Adam, and a total inability to do other than sin; he deserves everlasting pain as a punishment, but God in Christ bore the punishment in his stead; those who have explicit faith in Christ will be excused the eternal punishment, made capable of doing good, and given an eternal reward. The only good actions are those which seek intentionally the glory of God. All those without explicit faith in Christ will suffer torment in Hell for ever; God predestines in advance who will be saved and who will be damned.³⁴¹

On the other hand, Swinburne holds that a liberal position on Christian issues looks something like this:

Every man finds it difficult but possible to avoid sin; and although in some way something is wrong with him as a result of the sins of others, he is not guilty for those sins himself. Christ redeemed us by his suffering (which was not a substitute for the punishment which we would otherwise suffer, but in some way God taking our sins seriously), and made available to us a means of sanctification; but it is up to us whether we choose to avail ourselves of this redemption and sanctification, and God has not predestined how we will choose. However, if we choose to follow the good as we see it, we shall be saved (even if we do not on earth acquire Christian convictions). Although those actions which seek intentionally the glory of God are supremely good, so many other actions (including many actions of seeking one's own happiness, mundane or eternal) are good too. Only if we do not follow the good as we see it shall we be damned. But there may in the end be none of us in the latter category, or, if there are, this damnation will not consist of eternal pain.³⁴²

If a choice must be made, it is quite apt to say that Plantinga's view for the most part fits in with the hard position, whereas Swinburne's outlook is compatible with the liberal account. Plantinga holds that due to sin's degenerating effects, humans' possibilities to save themselves by their own voluntary efforts are dim, and that is why they need divine intervention in order to have faith and receive salvation. Swinburne, on the other hand, is more optimistic as regards humans' possibilities to have an influence on their destiny. He maintains that humans can by their own voluntary choices and actions, basically unaided by divine support, eventually acquire faith and thus merit salvation. One might say that for a hardliner faith is an unmerited gift by God to a frail sinful person, while in the liberal position faith is an accomplishment of an able person, which God rewards. Because of its more positive view on human nature and humans' capabilities, the liberal position can give a more substantial role for human freedom regarding religious matters than the hard position. However, at the same time the liberal position may easily understate the role supernatural grace has in the acquisition of faith according to traditional Christianity.³⁴³

³⁴¹ Swinburne 1989, 2. See Duns Scotus, *Lib III Sent Dist XXIII* q1.

³⁴² Swinburne 1989, 2-3.

³⁴³ Cf. Ala-Prinkkilä 2014, 105-106, 110, 118.

3 BELIEVING WITHOUT EVIDENCE

It seems natural to consider the cognitive aspect of faith as consisting of a largely involuntary belief in some strength. This was the claim of both Swinburne and Plantinga, though otherwise their views differ from each other in many ways. Swinburne explicitly argued that in order to have the belief required for faith, one needs to have some evidence for the propositions of faith. Given our terminology, this claim is actually in accordance with Plantinga's view. For when the propositions of faith are believed in the basic way Plantinga describes, they must "just seem to be true" like any proposition believed in the basic way. But this seeming-to-be-true or some equivalent "doxastic experience", which is Plantinga's notion (see section 1.2.2.), is non-propositional evidence for the truth of the propositions (for a discussion, see section 2.1.1.). Thus, one can say that in Plantinga's model believing the propositions of faith requires suitable non-propositional evidence.³⁴⁴

So, in order to believe the propositions of faith, one must apparently have some sort of evidence for the propositions' truth. Otherwise one cannot believe—or so it seems. This conclusion gives rise to a problem for religious doubters who find propositions of faith as attractive or in Jamesian terms as live hypotheses and would like to believe in them firmly. For a reflective religious doubter holds that the evidence for the truth of the propositions of faith is wanting. But then the doubter lacks evidence sufficient to yield belief, and so it looks like she cannot believe. After all, she cannot just will to believe them in this case. Thus, for a religious doubter it does not seem to be possible to have robust doxastic faith, that is, faith consisting of a firm belief. This difficulty encountering religious doubters is the main topic of the present chapter.

Some theistic philosophers have questioned the alleged problem involved in believing without sufficient evidence. John Bishop has actually argued for the contrary conclusion. He holds that a person can have a kind of fideistic faith, part of which amounts to having firm faith-beliefs even though the believer recognises that the propositions she believes in are not adequately supported by her total evidence. Bishop claims that this is possible since in the midst of evidential uncertainty beliefs can be acquired and sustained on non-evidential, passional grounds. Bishop's model of faith will be analysed in section 3.1.. In addition to the idea relating to the possibility of believing without sufficient evidence, Bishop's model includes other pertinent insights to the topic of voluntariness of faith.

There is also another line of response to the doubter's problem. This reply starts from the observation that though beliefs are not directly voluntary, we do have some indirect control over them: choosing different courses of action

³⁴⁴ A similar remark on Plantinga's account has been put forward by Philip Quinn. See Quinn 1994, 71-72. Cf. Jordan 2006, 44.

can have an effect on which propositions one comes to believe, and in this sense belief is, as one might say, to some extent indirectly voluntary (cf. section 1.2.3.).³⁴⁵ But how does this consideration help the religious doubter who would like to believe? Besides a Swinburnean advice that the doubter should do more impartial investigation (it may yield evidence sufficient to ground belief) and a Plantingian exhortation to contemplate the great things of the gospel (this can allegedly occasion the formation of Christian belief), it is widely argued that the doubter can acquire faith-beliefs by means that involve manipulating or rigging her doxastic states.

In the last case the doubter is advised to try to produce in herself belief in a proposition which she thinks is not evidentially supported. This resolution to the doubter's problem is sometimes associated—though apparently erroneously—with Blaise Pascal, who is best known for his pragmatic wager argument for faith-belief. In contemporary discussion this solution is endorsed by Jeff Jordan, also in connection with the pragmatic justification of faith-beliefs. Jordan's view is the central topic in section 3.2., where I will also shortly comment on the nature of pragmatic arguments and Pascal's view.

Believing or seeking to believe by manipulative means something not supported by one's overall evidence strikes *prima facie* as a blameworthy conduct. This, if asserted, would be an approach to the ethics of belief, where the central question is, as Andrew Chignell puts it, “whether there are norms of some sort governing our habits of belief-formation, belief-maintenance, and belief-relinquishment”.³⁴⁶ In view of that, I shall end this chapter by considering views about the ethics of belief that are relevant for our discussion. So, some related remarks on the ethics of belief will be presented in section 3.3..

3.1 JOHN BISHOP AND FAITH AS DOXASTIC VENTURE

Bishop has argued that faith involves what he calls a doxastic venture, which at heart amounts to a practical commitment to evidentially uncertain faith-beliefs. Thus, in Bishop's model of faith the practical aspect of faith is emphasised in conjunction with belief as the cognitive aspect. Bishop sees himself as advancing a modest version of fideism inspired by James's “The Will to Believe”.³⁴⁷ It should be noted, however, that James is not typically seen as a fideist but as a pragmatist (cf. section 3.2.1.). For Bishop Fideism roughly amounts to the view that having faith is permissible even if the propositions of faith lack adequate evidential support.³⁴⁸ Bishop presents his so-called doxastic venture model of faith in his *Believing by Faith* (2007), where he elaborates and expands on some of his previously published ideas.³⁴⁹ In what

³⁴⁵ Cf. Everitt 2004, 196.

³⁴⁶ See Chignell 2010.

³⁴⁷ Bishop 2007, xi.

³⁴⁸ See e.g. Bishop 2007, 2, 22.

³⁴⁹ See especially Bishop 2002; 2005. See also Bishop 2003; 2004; 2010.

follows, I will first analyse Bishop's model of faith in outline, after which its relevant features will be considered in detail.

3.1.1 THE DOXASTIC VENTURE MODEL OF FAITH

Bishop claims that at least meritorious Christian faith is not only a matter of having faith-beliefs and being pleased about their truth, but it essentially involves a practical commitment. In this respect Bishop's view deviates from Plantinga's and is more in line with that of Swinburne, who also emphasises the practical aspect of faith (see sections 1.1.2., 2.1.2., 2.1.3. and 2.2.2.). Bishop maintains that by practical commitment Christians rely on God for their welfare, and they must thus give up "trusting only themselves for directive control over their lives—and that involves genuine risk and real venture".³⁵⁰ In a Swinburnean way Bishop appears to identify this practical commitment or "venture", as he calls it, with trusting in God, which entails making oneself vulnerable to possible bad outcomes if things do not turn out as expected (for a discussion on Swinburne's notion of trust, see sections 2.1.2., 2.1.3., and 4.4.1.).³⁵¹

Bishop has named his view of faith as the doxastic venture model of faith, and it involves three conditions (for simplicity Bishop confines the discussion to the proposition that there is a God):

- (1) taking it to be true (with full weight) that God exists in his or her practical reasoning;³⁵²
- (2) doing so while holding that God exists, that is, while having the belief that God exists; and
- (3) recognising, correctly in accordance with the relevant norms, that it is not the case that his or her total available evidence adequately supports the truth that God exists.³⁵³

These conditions require further elucidation.

Clause (1) pertains to the practical aspect of Bishop's model of faith: it equals the claim that a person of faith makes a practical commitment to the faith-propositions she espouses (see section 3.1.2.). Clause (2) concerns the cognitive aspect of Bishop's model of faith and states that a person of faith believes the propositions of faith. Clause (3) exemplifies the peculiarity of Bishop's model: a person who in Bishop's terms is a "doxastic venturer" recognises that the belief on which she acts is not evidentially supported. Doxastic venture is thus a matter of commitment in the face of intellectual doubt.³⁵⁴ As an example of doxastic venture model Bishop proposes Kierkegaard's definition of faith as "an objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation process of the most passionate inwardness". Another example

³⁵⁰ Bishop 2007, 105-106.

³⁵¹ See Bishop 2010, ch. 6.

³⁵² On the face of it, Bishop's wordings here may suggest some kind of theological realism according to which God exists (only) in one's reasoning. However, this is not his intention, as we shall see.

³⁵³ Bishop 2007, 106-107.

³⁵⁴ Bishop 2007, 107.

in Bishop's view is Tillich's account of faith as "the state of being ultimately concerned", where the object of ultimate concern demands surrender and promises fulfilment, but the possibility that the object is a "false ultimate" cannot be rationally excluded, and thus doubt is an element of faith.³⁵⁵

Bishop contrasts his doxastic venture model of faith with what Paul Helm describes as the evidential proportion models of faith.³⁵⁶ While I find Bishop's comparison a bit unclear, I presume that one instructive difference between these models can be put as follows. Bishop seems to imply that in evidential proportion models the cognitive aspect of faith consists of a firm belief which is backed up by the amount of evidence required for such a belief. As one example he gives Plantinga's A/C model of faith (or, rather, the ideal instantiation of it). Bishop appears to hold that evidential proportion models can also be described as purely fiducial models, because in them the only possible venture of faith occurs in trusting in God, which (by all appearances) pertains to the practical aspect of faith. (In Plantinga's model trusting God would presumably count not as a part of faith but as "acting out" faith; see section 1.1.2..) By contrast, in the doxastic venture model of faith the venture takes place not only in the practical aspect of faith but also in the cognitive aspect, as the doxastic venturer, so to speak, ventures in believing against evidence (and does not, say, try to suppress or hide her belief).³⁵⁷

Bishop also distinguishes the doxastic venture model of faith from what he calls the sub-doxastic venture models of faith. These models, Bishop says, embrace his model's clauses (1) and (3) but not (2), which in Bishop's view involves firm, convinced belief. According to sub-doxastic venture models, a person of faith makes a full practical commitment to faith-propositions (clause 1) in spite of their being inconclusive concerning evidence (clause 3) while, as Bishop says, "believing no more than that theistic faith-propositions have a non-negligible probability of being true". As one example of a sub-doxastic venture model Bishop mentions Swinburne's Pragmatist view of faith.³⁵⁸ This is accurate enough: Swinburne holds that faith does not require strong belief but weak belief, which is a sub-doxastic, "less-than-full-belief" attitude. I would also point out that besides sub-doxastic venture models one could speak about non-doxastic venture models of faith. Such models also contain something along the lines of (1) and (3), but they switch (2) to some non-doxastic, "other-than-belief" attitude (for the sub-doxastic/non-doxastic distinction see section 1.1.2.; for a clear example of the non-doxastic venture model see Schellenberg's view of faith in section 4.4.).

Bishop concedes that sub-doxastic venture models can be adequate accounts of faith. In his view the crucial aspect of "authentic faith" is preparedness for full-weight practical commitment, as his model's clause (1)

³⁵⁵ Bishop 2007, 109. See Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1968), 180; Tillich 1957, 1, 21.

³⁵⁶ Helm 2000, 21. For a short description of Helm's notion of the evidential proportion model of faith, see section 2.1.3..

³⁵⁷ Cf. Bishop 2007, 108-109. Then again, see Bishop 2007, 117.

³⁵⁸ Bishop 2007, 110-111.

indicates. Though Bishop maintains that such commitment does naturally go with “straightforwardly *believing that it is true* that God exists”, he admits that persons can make the commitment without firmly believing the truth of the relevant faith-propositions. Bishop maintains that sub-doxastic venture models of faith—and non-doxastic models, I would add—would be the only rivals to evidential proportion models if fully doxastic venture under evidential ambiguity turned out to be impossible. But, Bishop argues, the doxastic venture model of faith is not impossible.³⁵⁹ The focal question regarding the feasibility of the doxastic venture model of faith is how the conjunction of (2) and (3) is possible, that is, how it is possible to believe without sufficient evidence. But before analysing Bishop’s solution to this problem, it is appropriate to consider the distinction between his model’s clauses (1) and (2), because it has relevance to the topic of the voluntariness of faith, among other things.

3.1.2 “HOLDING A PROPOSITION TRUE” AND “TAKING A PROPOSITION TO BE TRUE”

The distinction between holding and taking a proposition to be true, which is applied in clauses (1) and (2) of Bishop’s model of faith, refers to what kind of control over our beliefs we have. The distinction also bears relevance to action explanation. Bishop basically identifies holding a proposition *p* true with the mental state of believing that *p*, and it is in his view a largely involuntary or, rather, only to some extent an indirectly controllable state. But in addition to holding *p* true, Bishop maintains that belief that *p* is a disposition to take *p* as a premise in one’s theoretical and practical reasoning, whenever salient (like Bishop, I shall mostly focus on practical reasoning). Bishop maintains that, unlike holding a proposition true, taking a proposition to be true can be under our voluntary control: it is not just a mental event but a mental action.³⁶⁰

Consequently, one can say that the cognitive aspect of Bishop’s model of faith is largely involuntary (clause 2), whereas the practical aspect is voluntary (clause 1). Fundamentally, the same understanding of the voluntariness of faith is discernible in Swinburne’s Pragmatist view (see section 2.1.3.). However, the distinction between holding and taking a proposition to be true is not present in Swinburne’s account, and it is also instructive as such. In addition, the hold/take distinction, as Bishop acknowledges, is closely related to the better-known distinction between belief and acceptance, which will be discussed later (see sections 3.2.1. and 4.2.).³⁶¹ The hold/take distinction thus serves as a suitable introduction to this subject.

³⁵⁹ Bishop 2007, 110–111, 119–120.

³⁶⁰ Bishop 2007, 23, 29–35.

³⁶¹ Bishop 2007, 34 n. 12. With respect to the belief/acceptance distinction Bishop refers especially to Cohen 1992, and his account of taking-to-be-true approximates Cohen’s view. For some further discussion, see section 4.2.1..

In order to support his distinction, Bishop considers cases where a person holds that *p* but does not take *p* to be true in reasoning in which *p*'s truth would be relevant. Such cases in Bishop's view show that persons have the capacity to do otherwise than take to be true what they hold true. And this, he maintains, establishes that taking to be true is an action under our voluntary control. So, to begin with, Bishop argues that there is a kind of weakness of will that results in acting only tentatively on what is held clearly true on the evidence at hand. For example, a person may believe firmly that certain medical advice is correct, and yet, when it is time to put it into practice, she hesitates. In this case, Bishop says, the weight the person gives to the advice in her practical reasoning does not match the high degree with which the advice is held true.³⁶²

One might ask what exactly is the person failing to do in the example. Is she somehow failing to use the proposition about the medical advice as a premise in her practical reasoning and thereby failing to draw a conclusion about the appropriate course of action and so failing to act? Or is the person, while perhaps reasoning correctly about the advice, simply failing to act on the conclusion which her reasoning process recommends? Bishop's definition of taking to be true seems to entail something like the former view. I suppose that Bishop would say that taking *p* to be true in practical reasoning of necessity implies trying to act on *p* in appropriate circumstances. But then it is not possible to take *p* to be true in one's reasoning and yet fail to act on *p*. So, not trying to act on *p* means that one has not taken *p* to be true in one's practical reasoning. Whatever the plausibility of this view is, we can here suppose that taking *p* to be true in practical reasoning implies seeking to act on *p* in relevant situations.

To take another example, Bishop says that occasionally failure to take to be true what is held true shows strength rather than weakness. A person may, as Bishop says, come to suspect that certain beliefs of hers arise purely from prejudice and so refrain from taking them to be true in her practical reasoning. As an example, Bishop offers his own belief that a man who wears suede shoes is not to be trusted. Bishop says that while he cannot cease to believe this, he can refrain from taking it to be true in his practical reasoning. Bishop's third example pertains more to theoretical reasoning than to practical reasoning: a juror may believe that certain considerations indicate a certain verdict, but because of the judge's instruction that the considerations are inadmissible, the person may refrain from taking them to be true in her theoretical reasoning towards a verdict.³⁶³

Bishop maintains that the examples he gave are not typical. In his view instances of taking to be true are often neither deliberate nor conscious, and activated belief typically yields taking to be true quite automatically. Still, Bishop argues that takings to be true are actions over which we can exercise voluntary control. At least in some important cases, he says, "we can

³⁶² Bishop 2007, 37.

³⁶³ Bishop 2007, 37.

voluntarily go against the habituated flow from what we hold to what we take to be true”.³⁶⁴ This may already begin to look like a plausible conclusion. Bishop, however, has one further line of argument to support the view.

Bishop points out that it is clear that we possess a relatively unrestricted voluntary capacity in our practical reasoning to take propositions to be true which we do not believe to be true. For example, we may act as if we believed, or treat propositions as assumptions, working hypotheses, and so on. In cases like these, Bishop maintains, the weight we afford to the truth of a proposition in our practical reasoning exceeds the degree to which we believe it to be true. Bishop argues that once we recognise that we have this capacity to take to be true what is not held true, it is in his view not hard to admit that, conversely, we can at times prevent the flow from holding a proposition true to taking it to be true. How could it be, Bishop asks, that we possessed the capacity to take true what is not held true and yet lacked the capacity to not to take true what is held true?³⁶⁵

In my view there is an important truth in the general distinction between having an involuntary belief that *p* and voluntarily adopting *p*, whether believed or not, in one’s theoretical and practical reasoning. In some sense this distinction may look like a truism. However, Bishop maintains that philosophers of religion have not fully appreciated it.³⁶⁶ He holds that recognition of the capacity to take propositions to be true nonetheless has import *inter alia* to the issues concerning the voluntariness of belief. Though the capacity to take a proposition to be true is not generally doxastic, when we take it into account, doxastic control does not only amount to indirect control over acquisition, sustenance, and revision of beliefs. For, as Bishop says, doxastic control can “also be a matter of direct control [...] over the use made of what is believed in reasoning”.³⁶⁷ This is indubitably a significant observation, which is relevant to the ethics of belief, for example (see section 3.3.).

3.1.3 BELIEVING WITHOUT EVIDENCE: PASSIONALLY CAUSED BELIEFS

According to Bishop’s doxastic venture model of faith, a person of faith makes a voluntary practical commitment (clause 1) to largely involuntarily believed propositions (clause 2) whose truth the person sees as lacking evidential support (clause 3). Whereas the practical commitment is definitely possible to make, it is not obvious whether the commitment is possible with belief whose propositional content is not evidentially supported. As already noted, it is puzzling how a person could believe that *p* while not having sufficient evidence

³⁶⁴ Bishop 2007, 37-38.

³⁶⁵ Bishop 2007, 39-40.

³⁶⁶ Bishop 2007, ix-x.

³⁶⁷ Bishop 2007, 41.

for p. So, the conjunction of clauses (2) and (3) in Bishop's model is problematic.

Bishop maintains that the difficulty at hand is answerable. In his response he sees as his main influence James's "The Will to Believe". However, as should be clear by now, Bishop is not suggesting that doxastic venture is a matter of will to believe, since belief is not according to him voluntary. But neither is Bishop suggesting a Swinburnean reading of James according to which the doxastic venture would be a matter of acting as if some propositions were true (see section 2.1.3.). Instead, doxastic venture involves genuine belief. Bishop's construal of James is thus quite different from the above analyses, but, that being said, the view Bishop develops is not intended as a scholarly interpretation of James. As he says, his account is Jamesian only in the sense that it is James-inspired.³⁶⁸

How, then, could a person believe a proposition, if she recognises that it lacks evidential support? At first, Bishop admits that one typical cause of the attitude of belief is rational consideration of the evidence, which indicates truth, and thus prompts belief. But this, Bishop argues, is not the only way to form beliefs. In addition, he maintains, there is what James labels *passional* causes and which he prefers to call *non-evidential* causes of belief (I shall use these notions equivalently). According to Bishop's definition, the term "passional" includes all types of causes of belief that "do not consist in providing the believer with grounds (relative to the assumed correct evidential practice) for holding the proposition believed to be true".³⁶⁹ Bishop maintains that a wide variety of *passional* causes of belief must be acknowledged—he mentions emotions, wishes, desires, evaluations, and people's affiliations.³⁷⁰ For our concerns it is just important to note that *passional* causes are from the believer's viewpoint grounds that do not indicate truth in the way evidential grounds do. Bishop sees *passional* causes as supporting the possibility of believing without sufficient evidence.

On the face of it, to me it looks odd that reflection upon one's *passional* grounds for a proposition p (say, a desire that p) could alone cause or sustain belief that p in the same way as considering evidence for p does. Bishop concedes that lack of evidential support for p, when one becomes aware of it, tends to undermine any inclination to believe. But, he argues, this is not a universal psychological law. Instead, he argues, suitable *passional* causes can sustain belief even if the believer recognises that the truth of the proposition believed lacks adequate evidential support.³⁷¹ I assume that in cases like this the believer acknowledges that her belief is *passionally* caused and sustained: she discerns that *passional* factors are the reason why she believes as she does.³⁷² I suppose that Bishop would say that if one's *passional* grounds for

³⁶⁸ Bishop 2007, 112.

³⁶⁹ Bishop 2007, 114. Cf. Schellenberg 2009, 208-209.

³⁷⁰ Bishop compares his list to that of James: "fear and hope, prejudice and passion, imitation and partisanship, the circumpressure of our caste and set". James 1897, 9.

³⁷¹ Bishop 2005, 114-115.

³⁷² Cf. Bishop 2007, 116-117.

believing a proposition disappear, the belief fades away, too. It is noteworthy that passional believing is close to what John Heil has labelled doxastic incontinence. According to him, doxastic incontinence concerns cases where a person believes against her better epistemic judgment. Heil's view about the possibility of incontinent believing seems to be, in essence, similar to that of Bishop.³⁷³

As things stand, in Bishop's view the conjunction of his model's (2) and (3) is possible, because in the midst of evidential uncertainty faith-beliefs can be caused and sustained on passional grounds. Moreover, Bishop argues that passional grounds can motivate the believer to take the believed propositions to be true in her practical reasoning. For example, Bishop says that through being moved by an encounter with a theistic tradition, a person may be passionately caused to believe that there is a God, and this belief can in his view remain even if the believer comes to realise that God's existence is not supported by the evidence. Bishop maintains that such a person also has the passional motivation to take the proposition to be true in her practical reasoning.³⁷⁴ And if the person voluntarily chooses to take the proposition to be true, she is exemplifying the doxastic venture model of faith.

Bishop argues that his doxastic venture model of faith accommodates both the active and the passive or gifted aspects of Christian faith. The latter is in his view illustrated by the feature that doxastic venture is possible only for those who happen to have passionately caused faith-belief, and having such a belief is beyond a person's own direct voluntary control. Bishop seems to opine that on a Christian understanding one's passionately caused faith-belief ultimately comes only by the grace of God.³⁷⁵ On the other hand, the active, voluntary aspect of the doxastic venture model of faith is, as Bishop puts it, the passionately motivated choice "to take to be true what one holds true through causes that one recognizes oneself to be non-evidential".³⁷⁶

Bishop appears to see the phenomenon of passional believing in a positive light, at least with respect to faith. However, I suppose that it can occasionally be something negative, too. This is the case when, say, a person has dubious beliefs, whether religious or not, caused passional/non-evidentially by indoctrination with no regard to the truth of the matter. Amber Griffioen has drawn attention to a similar problem in Bishop's model. She argues that beliefs arrived at by, say, wishful thinking, self-deception, hypnosis, electroshock therapy, and a bump on a head may all be candidates for doxastic venturing, as long as they are passionately held and paired with the correct judgment about their evidential ambiguity.³⁷⁷ But believing in this way is surely a sign of

³⁷³ See Heil 1984, 68-69. On doxastic incontinence, see also Mele 1986; 1987, ch. 8.

³⁷⁴ Bishop 2007, 116.

³⁷⁵ This presumably means that from Christian viewpoint a person of faith can think of her believing on passional grounds as an indication of having received grace. For some relevant discussion on this theme, see the evaluation of Plantinga's model in section 2.2.3..

³⁷⁶ Bishop 2007, 116-117.

³⁷⁷ Griffioen 2014, 8.

irrationality. Bishop would thus probably want to exclude certain types of passionate believings from his account.³⁷⁸

However, there is an additional and more serious critique against Bishop's model. Andrei Buckareff has argued that the possibility of believing by passionate causes can be altogether questioned. He holds that belief's truth-aiming nature (on which see section 1.2.2.) counters the possibility of acquiring and sustaining a belief by mere passionate causes. Buckareff argues as follows. Suppose *p*'s truth is not supported nor excluded by one's evidence. If in this case one could come to believe that *p* by a passionate cause alone, then one could do so with no regard for the truth of *p* or, as I would rather say, with no regard to what seems to one to be the truth of *p*, since passionate causes do not indicate the truth of *p*. But then one would *per impossibile* believe that *p* is true while also failing to believe that because one's evidence does not support the truth of *p*. Buckareff argues that we are here "somewhere in the vicinity of Moore's paradox".³⁷⁹

In his reply Bishop appears to think that Buckareff is erroneously criticising him for espousing some form of direct doxastic voluntarism.³⁸⁰ I do not think that this reading is adequate, although I do think that granting the possibility of passionate believing implies something akin to direct doxastic voluntarism (see below). Either way, to me Buckareff's main assertion seems sound: passionate believing is inconsistent with belief's truth-aiming nature. Before taking Buckareff's critique further, it is appropriate to consider one proviso Bishop introduces into the concept of belief.

We have thus far taken it for granted—though also initially argued for—that in order to believe that *p* one needs to have evidence to support *p*. While this seems to be Buckareff's assumption, too,³⁸¹ Bishop denies it. He maintains that consciously "to believe is, indeed, to *believe true*" (that is, belief aims at truth), but "it is not necessarily to *believe evident*".³⁸² Bishop notes that this claim is in conflict with Jonathan Adler's view according to which it is intrinsic to the notion of belief that one cannot believe a proposition whose truth one recognises as insufficiently supported by evidence.³⁸³

If, following Bishop, it is denied that belief is necessarily tied to evidence, can there be room for non-evidential, passionate believing after all? I presume that persons can have acquired beliefs via passionate causes unconsciously or unbeknownst to them. I also assume that such beliefs can be sustained if not properly reflected upon, that is, if their evidential status, origin, and coherence with other beliefs are never considered.³⁸⁴ So, from this point of view the link

³⁷⁸ Cf. Bishop 2007, 165. See also Griffioen 2014, 9.

³⁷⁹ Buckareff 2005, 438–439.

³⁸⁰ Bishop 2005, 447.

³⁸¹ See e.g. Buckareff 2005, 438.

³⁸² Bishop 2007, 115.

³⁸³ Adler 2002, 26–27; Bishop 2007, 115 n. 25.

³⁸⁴ What is more, Buckareff holds that non-epistemic, passionate reasons may explain why a person believes as she does. For example, passionate causes can make the evidence a person has more vivid or salient than it actually is. But this, Buckareff maintains, does not mean that from the person's viewpoint she considers her belief as being caused and sustained by passionate reasons. Buckareff 2005, 438.

between belief and evidence is not a necessary one. However, I am inclined to think that things are otherwise with regard to belief held in full consciousness or awareness. In this case it seems that believing is unavoidably tied to evidence, given the premise that belief aims at truth. I would argue for this conclusion as follows.

Consciously believing on mere non-evidential grounds entails believing irrespective of what seems to one to be the truth, since non-evidential causes do not indicate truth. However, believing irrespective of what seems to one to be the truth is inconsistent with belief's truth-aiming nature. But this is just to say that consciously believing irrespective of truth-indicating evidence is inconsistent with belief's truth-aiming nature. But then it seems that consciously only believing on evidential grounds is possible. If a person has, say, unconsciously acquired a belief on passional grounds, the belief will wither away once the person fully acknowledges its cause (unless the person now happens to have proper evidence for the proposition believed).

To further support the view that non-evidential believing is conceptually problematic, one might note that our argument for that conclusion closely parallels the logical arguments against the possibility of acquiring and sustaining belief at will in full consciousness (see section 1.2.3.). Buckareff appears to acknowledge this similarity,³⁸⁵ which does not seem to be a mere coincidence. The significant consideration here is that volition is by all appearances one possible non-evidential cause of belief. But then it seems that the influential logical arguments against believing at will apply *mutatis mutandis* to any type of non-evidential believing. (Incidentally, Pojman appears to make this inference when he presents his argument against direct doxastic voluntarism.)³⁸⁶

Given what was just said, it is worth pointing out that if one argues, like Bishop, that conscious non-evidential believing is possible, one would eventually have to admit that it is also possible to believe by a sufficiently strong volition, since volition is one non-evidential cause of belief among others. But then it seems that the idea of non-evidential believing entails as one special case of it direct doxastic voluntarism or something close to it. With respect to this, Bishop is not actually consistent: although he generally argues for the possibility of passional believing, he denies the possibility of believing at will by referring to Williams's logical argument (on which see section 1.2.3.).³⁸⁷

The claim that non-evidential believing is not possible may go against everyday experiences. It may look as if many people fairly consciously believe non-evidentially. However, such counter-examples must be merely apparent if non-evidential believing is not possible. Indeed, I assume that such

³⁸⁵ Cf. Buckareff 2005, 439.

³⁸⁶ In one occasion Pojman concludes that one cannot believe in full consciousness "that p and I believe that p for other than truth considerations", where Pojman equates truth considerations with evidential considerations. Pojman 1986a, 170.

³⁸⁷ Bishop 2007, 30. For a somewhat more detailed critique of the possibility of non-evidential believing, see Eklund 2014.

examples can be explained away. For example, a person may obviously claim to believe passionately while she does not, in fact, believe. The person may have incorrectly identified her propositional attitude as belief when it is more aptly described, say, as hope. In common parlance there may be a tendency to use the term “belief” to refer to various propositional attitudes that should be distinguished from belief and each other. In addition, a person may seem to believe non-evidentially because her belief is sustained on grounds some of us would deem non-evidential, but which the believer sincerely sees as evidential. Consciously believing that *p* requires only that from the believer’s subjective viewpoint *p* has evidential support, whatever that support is.³⁸⁸

3.1.4 CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

In sum, according to Bishop’s doxastic venture model of faith, having faith involves (1) voluntarily taking it to be true with full weight that God exists in his or her practical reasoning; (2) doing so while involuntarily believing (holding) that God exists on passional grounds; and (3) recognising that it is not the case that the total available evidence adequately supports the truth that God exists.³⁸⁹ Clause (1) pertains to the practical aspect of Bishop’s model of faith and (2) to its cognitive aspect. Clause (3) illustrates the evidential circumstance where faith is exemplified. Bishop claims that the conjunction of clauses (2) and (3) is possible, because in the midst of evidential uncertainty it is possible to consciously sustain belief via non-evidential, passional causes like emotions and desires.

However, following Buckareff I argued against Bishop that there are reasons to doubt whether conscious passional believing is possible. But this does not entail that Bishop’s insights are insignificant. His hold/take distinction is noteworthy regarding the voluntariness of faith and doxastic control, in general. Bishop also indicated that not strong belief but full-weight practical commitment, that is, not (2) but (1), is only necessary for “authentic faith”. This consideration points to the feasibility of some sort of sub- or non-doxastic model of faith. However, even here I would partly disagree with Bishop. Whereas he holds that exemplifying the sub-doxastic model of faith requires full-weight practical commitment, I am not sure whether that is justified given that (3) holds. Instead, I propose that the practical commitment should be cautious and tentative (for a discussion, see sections 4.3.2. and 4.5.).

What is more, in my view appropriate passional grounds can have a positive role in sub- or non-doxastic models of faith, too. Bishop argued that passional factors can motivate one to take propositions to be true in one’s practical reasoning. Something like this can be seen as the correct function of suitable

³⁸⁸ Bishop’s early example of passional believing is a bereaved son whose emotions cause him to believe that his dead father is still somehow with him. Bishop 2005, 448. If this means that the son has some kind of feeling of his father’s presence and conceives this as evidence for his actual presence, then he may believe. But if the son merely wishes that his father were still with him, it is hard to see how this wish alone could cause and sustain a corresponding belief.

³⁸⁹ Bishop 2007, 106-107.

passional grounds: instead of causing belief (clause 2), as Bishop chiefly emphasises, passional factors can motivate one to exemplify sub- or non-doxastic faith in practice (clause 1). Incidentally, Buckareff appears to reason in a similar way when he proposes a sub-doxastic venture model of faith as a viable alternative to Bishop's doxastic venture model.³⁹⁰

In general, a given religion can be passionately attractive for a person while perhaps being wanting from an evidential point of view. Being attracted to a religion in this way, which is likely for the most part to be beyond one's direct voluntary control,³⁹¹ can motivate one not so much to believe that the religion is true but to make a tentative voluntary commitment to it, which may then amount to exemplifying a type of sub- or non-doxastic faith. After some further elaboration this might be presented as one possible reconstruction of what it means to embrace, in Jamesian terms, a hypothesis presented in a genuine option (see section 4.5.). Whether this course of action can be in some sense reasonable will be briefly addressed in section 3.3., where the ethics of belief will be discussed.

3.2 PRAGMATIC ARGUMENTS AND THE ACQUISITION OF BELIEF

While it may not be possible to consciously believe without evidence, it is widely argued in analytic theistic philosophy that one can intentionally get oneself to believe something not supported by one's overall evidence through means which involve some sort of manipulation of one's doxastic states. In analytic theism, this sort of belief-formation is often discussed in connection with pragmatic arguments for religious belief. Accordingly, in what follows, I shall first briefly describe the nature of pragmatic arguments as they are characteristically understood by analytic theistic philosophers.³⁹² This puts the main issue in a proper context, the main issue being how or whether a person can by some type of intentional manipulation come to believe propositions not warranted by her overall evidence. I will here for the most part make use of Jeff Jordan's defence of pragmatic argumentation in his *Pascal's Wager: Pragmatic Arguments and Belief in God* (2006), where he elaborates his previously published thoughts.³⁹³

³⁹⁰ Buckareff 2005, 440-442. In his account Buckareff follows Joshua Golding, who argues that the cognitive stance of a person of faith is "best understood as an assumption that God exists for the purpose of pursuing a good relationship with God". Golding 1990, 486.

³⁹¹ Cf. Bishop 2007, 116.

³⁹² There may be other, perhaps more adequate ways to conceive pragmatic reasoning as regards religious belief and faith, in general, but here we should take analytic theists' interpretations for granted. After all, that is what we are interested in at the moment.

³⁹³ See e.g. Jordan 1994; 1996; 1997; 2005. See also Jordan 2013.

3.2.1 PRAGMATIC ARGUMENTS AND THE PROBLEM OF BELIEF-ACQUISITION

Typically arguments for a proposition *p* seek to provide evidential justification for *p*. In this way the arguments attempt to indicate that *p* is true, and thus, if they are convincing, they prompt us to form the belief that *p*. Such evidential arguments are truth-directed. Pragmatic arguments, on the other hand, are utility-directed. One class of such arguments, as Jeff Jordan puts it, seeks “to motivate the acquisition of a belief just because of the benefits generated by holding that belief”.³⁹⁴ For example, an unfit runner might acknowledge that she is not in best shape, and thus she does not have sufficient evidence to believe that she will do well in the upcoming race. However, the runner may still argue that it is in her interests to believe that the race will be a success because having that belief would boost her confidence and reinforce her effort. In this case the runner has a pragmatic motivation to believe; a pragmatic argument for belief that she will do well in the race. As the example illustrates, pragmatic considerations are typically evoked in situations where evidence is taken to be inconclusive.

Religious beliefs have also been defended on pragmatic grounds. Jordan distinguishes between truth-dependent and truth-independent pragmatic arguments for religious belief. The former recommend belief because of the benefits gained if the proposition believed turns out to be true.³⁹⁵ A crude version of Pascal’s wager may serve as an example: one should believe that there is a God, since one will thus attain supreme good, that is, salvation, if there really is a God who grants salvation to believers.³⁹⁶ In contrast, a truth-independent pragmatic argument commends belief just because of the benefits gained by having that belief, whether or not the proposition believed turns out to be true. A suitable example of such argument is what Nicholas Everitt calls the argument from solace: one should have religious belief because it gives as such purpose to life and helps one to cope with life’s misfortunes, whether it is true or not.³⁹⁷ One can also combine truth-dependent and truth-independent arguments. This is the stance Jordan adopts. He is influenced by James’s and Pascal’s ideas and claims in his “Jamesian Wager” that having religious belief is intrinsically beneficial, whether or not there is a God, and it will be even more so if it turns out to be true that there is a God.³⁹⁸

There is, however, a problem in making the step from having pragmatic reasons for belief that *p* to actually believing that *p*. As Richard Foley points out, pragmatic reasons are ordinarily ineffective in producing belief. Since belief aims at truth (see section 1.2.2.), in order to believe that *p* one needs to have truth-indicating evidential reasons for *p*. Pragmatic reasons for *p* are not

³⁹⁴ Jordan 1996, 409.

³⁹⁵ Jordan 1996, 410.

³⁹⁶ Cf. Swinburne 2005, 125. Whether mere belief is enough for salvation can be questioned. See section 2.1.2.. See also Everitt 2004, 197-198.

³⁹⁷ Everitt 2004, 205-206.

³⁹⁸ Jordan 2006, 5.

truth- but utility-indicating reasons for p, and thus pragmatic reasons do not prompt belief that p.³⁹⁹ The problem here is essentially the same as that with Bishop's suggestion that one can consciously believe on non-evidential, passional grounds (see section 3.1.3.). This is to be expected, since pragmatic reasons are no doubt a sub-class of non-evidential reasons for believing a proposition.

Jordan acknowledges the ineffectuality of forming a belief on pragmatic grounds. But, he argues, all that follows from this is that in order to acquire pragmatically vindicated belief, some sort of "belief-inducing technology" will be necessary.⁴⁰⁰ In analytic theists' discussion it is fairly commonly held that such technologies are readily at hand. If we omit such extreme procedures as hypnosis and science-fictional belief-inducing pills, the method to acquire a belief specified in advance is taken to involve following kinds of things: selective reading of evidence, socialising with persons who believe, indoctrination, subliminal suggestion, and acting as if one believed.⁴⁰¹ These look like biased belief-forming techniques in contrast to honest inquiry: a person using these methods is seeking to believe a proposition which from her viewpoint is not, on balance, evidentially justified.⁴⁰² These techniques illustrate one way to try to acquire beliefs indirectly at will.

The discussion on cultivating religious beliefs in the above-mentioned ways has been mainly focused on the permissibility of such actions (see section 3.3.). The possibility of getting oneself to believe by such means has not very often been questioned.⁴⁰³ However, I believe that precisely that can be done. To begin with, Foley has offered preliminary considerations which indicate that deliberately manipulating oneself to believe is more difficult than it is typically assumed.⁴⁰⁴ First of all, Foley argues that manipulating one's beliefs is to "plot against ourselves so as to get ourselves in what we would now regard as a worse evidential situation". He points out that such plottings are unlikely to be narrowly constrained, since in his view beliefs cannot be ordinarily altered one by one, but significant clumps of belief have to be altered if any belief is to be altered.⁴⁰⁵

Foley does not elucidate his claim further, but I assume that his idea is that if a person tries to believe that p, and p is not evidentially vindicated for her, the person would also have to get rid of all of her beliefs (or evidences) which she acknowledges are inconsistent with p's truth or imply not-p. In addition, one might argue that when it is a set of propositions that is attempted to believe, the number of beliefs in need of alteration would likely increase. This indicates that manipulating oneself to believe, say, that the Christian creed as

³⁹⁹ Foley 1994, 38.

⁴⁰⁰ Jordan 2006, 54

⁴⁰¹ See e.g. Bishop 2007, 118; Jordan 2006, 55; Pojman 2003, 541; Swinburne 2005, 26.

⁴⁰² Cf. Foley 1994, 41.

⁴⁰³ Cf. Everitt 2004, 196-197.

⁴⁰⁴ Nicholas Everitt has also raised similar reservations, but more needs to be said than he says, for his ultimate claim seems to be just that, on the face of it, it is doubtful whether intentional belief-manipulation can be "practically effective" for some persons. See Everitt 2004, 197.

⁴⁰⁵ Foley 1994, 41. Cf. Pojman 1986a, 190.

a whole is true would likely require a considerable change in one's noetic structure, and one may query how easily such a change is realised.

In addition, Foley holds that in order to succeed, the project of manipulating one's beliefs must conceal its tracks. He argues that self-deception will be necessary, whereby a person somehow gets herself to forget that she has deliberately manipulated her evidential situation to produce the belief sought after. Otherwise, Foley maintains, the person would not at the end of the manipulation be convinced by the evidence: she would be aware that it is biased. Indeed, it seems that one cannot believe that *p* while being aware that *p* has been produced by a biased procedure that does not properly indicate truth. As we have argued, consciously believing on grounds that do not seem to properly indicate truth does not seem to be possible (see section 3.1.3.). So, by the looks of it, biased belief-formation requires self-deception, that is, concealment of its tracks. Foley holds that "these plottings require considerable effort".⁴⁰⁶ As a result, there are some tentative considerations which cast doubt on the easiness of belief-manipulation.

Jordan has replied to Foley's criticism in his defence of pragmatic argumentation. At first he grants that the most readily available belief-inducing technologies, such as selective reading of evidence, involve self-deception for the reason Foley has pointed out. However, he maintains that there are belief-inducing technologies which do not require self-deception. But if so, a person need not hide from herself that she has manipulated her evidential situation in order to produce belief.⁴⁰⁷ If this is true, the task of inducing a belief in oneself may be to some extent easier than Foley's reasoning suggests.

Jordan invites us to consider a belief-inducing technique which has two constituents. First is the acceptance of a proposition, and second is to act on that acceptance. According to Jordan's definition, acceptance is to volitionally assent to a proposition, which apparently amounts to employing the proposition as a premise in one's deliberations, whether or not one believes the proposition to be true. As for acting on an accepted proposition, in Jordan's view it means to behave as if the proposition were true (cf. Bishop's account of taking a proposition to be true in section 3.1.2.).⁴⁰⁸ Jordan claims, in reference to Daryl Bem's psychological studies, on the one hand, and Festinger's and Carlsmith's, on the other, that accepting a proposition and acting on it is a common way of generating belief in that proposition. He argues, moreover, that this process does not involve self-deception.⁴⁰⁹

Jordan's claim can be questioned. Short of additional explanation, it is not obvious how a person could in full awareness come eventually to believe that *p* by way of accepting and acting on *p*. For accepting and acting on *p* is not any

⁴⁰⁶ Foley 1994, 41.

⁴⁰⁷ Jordan 2006, 54-55.

⁴⁰⁸ On the distinction between belief and acceptance, Jordan refers to Alston 1996a and Cohen 1992. See Jordan 2006, 55 n. 28. Jordan's view is closer to that of Cohen than Alston, and Alston's view on acceptance diverges from Cohen's in important respects. On Alston's account, see section 4.2..

⁴⁰⁹ Jordan 2006, 57. See Bem 1972; Festinger and Carlsmith 1959.

kind of truth-indicating evidential reason for *p*, and so it does not dispose one to believe that *p*.⁴¹⁰ Jordan's claim that acceptance can generate belief becomes more understandable once we realise that in his view one can believe that *p* while acknowledging that evidence for *p* is inconclusive. He holds that even if believing that *p* is "*being disposed to feel that p is probably the case*", it does not follow that believing that *p* involves "*being disposed to feel that p is probably the case based on the evidence at hand*".⁴¹¹ But here Jordan seems to make essentially the same claim as Bishop made: believing is not necessarily tied to evidence. However, as we have argued, if belief's aiming at truth is taken seriously, conscious non-evidential believing is conceptually puzzling (see section 3.1.3.). So, it does not look like mere acceptance plus action could eventually yield belief.

As things stand, it seems that Foley is right in insisting that intentional manipulation of belief requires self-deception. A person who is trying to induce in herself belief that *p* needs to somehow get from the state where she is consciously deceiving herself to believe into a state where traces of the deceit are absent and she believes that *p* and thinks she has good evidence for *p*. However, self-deception has its own puzzles, as the extensive philosophical literature concerning it shows. Taking a closer look into this topic further illuminates the problems attached to the deliberate manipulation of beliefs.

3.2.2 INTENTIONAL SELF-DECEPTION AS A MEANS TO ACQUIRE BELIEF

According to the traditional model of self-deception, a person is deceiving herself if she gets herself to believe that *p* while she truly believes that not-*p* (I suppose that changing the disbelief into non-belief would not greatly alter the issue). This model of self-deception has been thought to raise two paradoxes, which Alfred Mele has labelled the static and the dynamic puzzles. The static puzzle refers to the deceiver's state of mind: how can it be possible to hold simultaneously contradictory beliefs?⁴¹² The dynamic puzzle concerns the strategy of self-deception: how can anyone deceive herself without frustrating her intention? For a person who is deceived must be unaware of the deceit so that it can be successful, but then a self-deceiver has to be unaware of her own deceitful scheme, and this seems rather puzzling.⁴¹³ Finding a solution to these

⁴¹⁰ There are perhaps some exceptions where it is not wholly inappropriate to say that acceptance yields belief. For example, a cowardly person may accept and act as if she is courageous, and in the course of time this can make her courageous. But in this case the former coward now has evidential grounds to believe that she is courageous, and hence believe that she is, in fact, courageous. So, even here it is not acceptance and acting as if *per se* which stands as the grounds for the belief in question. Instead, acceptance and acting as if yield a change in the person, which forms the evidential ground for belief.

⁴¹¹ Jordan 2006, 55.

⁴¹² Whether consciously holding contradictory beliefs is a paradox in the sense of being impossible may be contested, but I assume that it is problematic. For some relevant discussion, see e.g. Makinson 1965. See also Eklund 2014, 320 n. 30.

⁴¹³ See Mele 1987, 121, 138; 2001, 6-8.

two paradoxes is vital if one wants to defend the possibility of self-deception. Accordingly, different accounts of self-deception have been developed.⁴¹⁴

The way Foley elaborated deliberate belief-manipulation resembles what Ian Deweese-Boyd calls the temporal partitioning model of self-deception. According to this model, self-deception is a process extended over time where the self-deceiver consciously attempts to get herself to believe that *p* and in the process seeks to lose her original belief that not-*p* and to forget her deceptive intention.⁴¹⁵ We may suppose that this process involves mainly selective reading of evidence, socialising with believers, and a Jordan-type of accepting and acting on relevant propositions. On the face of it, this sort of intentional self-deception readily dissolves the static puzzle of self-deception. According to the model, a self-deceiver never holds contradictory beliefs but seeks over time to change her mental state from disbelief (or non-belief) to belief that *p*.

But while it may be unaffected by the static puzzle, I am not sure how the temporal partitioning model as depicted so far could solve the dynamic paradox of self-deception. That is, how could the offered strategy to deceive oneself be successful? According to the model, one can deceive oneself to believe by somehow forgetting the deceptive intention in the course of time. But one might ask how can the deceit succeed if the deception is forgotten? If a person intends to deceive herself into believing that *p* but during the process forgets her intention, it seems that the deceit is left unfinished.⁴¹⁶ On the other hand, it seems that intending to forget the deceit is a somewhat futile attempt. To try to forget one's deceptive intention would presumably just intensify the memory of it, as the psychological ironic process theory holds.⁴¹⁷ So, deceiving oneself to believe in full awareness of what one is trying to do appears to be a demanding task.

However, Deweese-Boyd points out that on the temporal partitioning model a self-deceiver need not necessarily hide or forget her deceptive intention in order to acquire the belief sought after. If this is true, the mentioned difficulties would be avoided. Deweese-Boyd maintains that the intention to deceive need not be forgotten in such cases where the self-deceiver comes to think that what started as a deceit-process by coincidence led her to truth.⁴¹⁸ That is, the self-deceiver may as a result of the deception think that the deceiving process led her to circumstances in which she came to have evidence sufficient to yield belief. In the case at hand, the evidence would likely be, say, a religious experience or an awareness which indicates God's existence or presence and thus prompts belief.

⁴¹⁴ For an overview on different accounts, see Deweese-Boyd 2012.

⁴¹⁵ Deweese-Boyd 2012, ch. 2.1..

⁴¹⁶ Someone might suggest that one first deceives oneself to believe that *p* and then tries to forget the deception while retaining the belief. But this does not seem to be a credible solution. As we have argued, one cannot believe that *p* while being aware that the belief is acquired by deceptive means. So, the deception needs to be somehow hidden before one can come to believe, and it is precisely this that is problematic.

⁴¹⁷ On the ironic process theory, see e.g. Wegner 1994.

⁴¹⁸ Deweese-Boyd 2012, ch. 2.1..

It is of crucial importance to note that in the above case it is still assumed—whether rightly or not (cf. Pascal’s view below)—that the self-deceiver who comes to think that she has acquired evidence sufficient to ground belief has actually deceived herself into believing. The assumption is that the evidence the deceiver has acquired is actually misrepresentative: it is produced by a biased mechanism, though from the believer’s viewpoint it does not look like that (if it did look like that, she would not believe). This means that the self-deception occurs on a sub-conscious level; the deceptive mechanism functions sub-consciously. Unbeknownst to the deceiver, the mechanism conditions her to perceive the world in a biased way which stimulates the occurrence of relevant evidence and thus the formation of the relevant beliefs.⁴¹⁹ Note, however, that the belief thus acquired is not necessarily false: a person can by self-deception come to believe a proposition which by serendipity is true.

3.2.3 CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

So, a type of intentional self-deception that occurs ultimately sub-consciously seems possible. However, such deception does not seem to secure success, since that depends on whether the underlying deceptive mechanism starts to work. And whether the mechanism starts to work is something one cannot guarantee but only to some extent contribute to by initially engaging in the process of self-deception. So, the modest conclusion to be drawn is that while there may not in principle be obstacles to intentionally inducing a belief in oneself, it is nonetheless a type of action which has difficulties attached to it.⁴²⁰ In addition to these difficulties, intentional self-deception looks like a blameworthy course of action. This is a topic I will discuss briefly in section 3.3., which is concerned with the ethics of belief.

In this connection I would like to make an excursion to Blaise Pascal’s view of belief-formation by pragmatic motives. For against initial appearances, it seems to diverge from the one analysed previously. So, for religious doubters who find his pragmatic wager argument attractive and yet cannot believe, Pascal recommends a course of action which in his view will likely bring about belief:

⁴¹⁹ Everitt has offered a depiction of how such a deception might go: “The course of action might include, for example, mixing with lots of intellectually able theists whom I anyway find morally admirable, avoiding atheists, attending church/synagogue/mosque, reading theistic tracts and avoiding atheistic tracts, and so on. I could go through the outward motions of the believer, for example, in praying. At the start, I might well think to myself that my prayers were ridiculous. But it could well be that as I persevered, and as I mixed constantly with other people who took praying seriously, I would gradually find myself taking it seriously too. I would move from thinking that in prayer I was merely communing with myself, to thinking that I really was communicating with another presence, a spiritual force who heard me and who from time to time responded to me. I would come to think that a course of action which I had embarked on in a somewhat cynical and self-interested fashion had, by very great good fortune, brought me to accept important truths which I would otherwise have missed. I would be a genuine believer.” Everitt 2004, 196-197.

⁴²⁰ This is not to say that persons do not deceive themselves into belief in less than full awareness, and not deliberately.

[...] follow the way by which they [who now believe] began. They behaved just as if they did believe, taking holy water, having masses said, and so on. That will make you believe quite naturally, and will make you more docile.⁴²¹

At first glance, Pascal seems to be suggesting a simplistic model of belief-manipulation: act as if you believed and belief will eventually come (cf. Jordan's proposals in section 3.2.1.).⁴²² However, while this is a fairly common interpretation of Pascal's view,⁴²³ it has been criticised by some commentators.

For example, Ward Jones claims, in short, that Pascal was not encouraging self-deception when he recommended acting as if in order to believe. Instead, Jones holds, Pascal thought that such action can actually make God's grace more likely to occur and thus more likely to bring about belief. Jones holds that grace is, if experienced, taken by the believer to be a truth-conducive evidential determinant of belief. Quite obviously, in this case the experience of grace which grounds belief is not produced by a deceptive mechanism, since it is supposedly initiated by God himself.⁴²⁴

Given Jones's construal, one might say that the role of the wager argument for Pascal was not to motivate a doubter to deceive herself into believing but to persuade her to voluntarily seek grace by acting as if in the expectation that God will in some way grant to her grace-based evidence sufficient to yield belief.⁴²⁵ In line with this understanding, Thomas Morris similarly argues that Pascal intended the wager argument to motivate a certain kind of religiously relevant behaviour which would erode emotional and attitudinal obstacles to belief and would "put us in a better epistemic position to access the evidence that does exist".⁴²⁶ According to this understanding, Pascal was clearly not encouraging self-deception or belief-manipulation. This makes his usage of pragmatic reasoning vis-à-vis religious belief more attractive than that of Jordan.⁴²⁷

⁴²¹ *Pensées* 418.

⁴²² Cf. Jones 1998, 178.

⁴²³ See e.g. Bishop 2007, 118-119; Deweese-Boyd 2012, ch. 2.1.; Eklund 2012, 449; Flew 1976, 63; Pojman 1986a, 50-54; Swinburne 2005, 128.

⁴²⁴ Jones 1998, 180-181, 187. See e.g. *Pensées* 808. For the way in which grace yields belief, see Jones 1998, ch. 4. See also Jenkins's preferred interpretation of Aquinas in section 2.1.2..

⁴²⁵ Incidentally, given Jones's interpretation, Pascal's recommendation can from the Plantingian point of view be seen as seeking faith.

⁴²⁶ Morris 1994a, 57, 60. "The unbeliever should begin an attempt to conform his life to a pattern set by true believers. He should begin to think on the idea of God; he should meditate upon moving religious stories; he should attempt to pray, as far as that is possible; he should associate with people who already believe and hold religious values to be very important; and he should expose himself to religious rituals and worship." Morris 1994a, 56-57. Morris's elaboration is reminiscent of William Wainwright's view. Wainwright has sought to argue that religious belief can, and perhaps should be, based on evidence, but "the evidence can be accurately assessed only by men and women who possess the proper moral and spiritual qualifications". Wainwright 1995, 3.

⁴²⁷ Jones's and Morris's interpretation of the role of the wager argument avoids a theological peculiarity involved in the earlier surveyed view that pragmatic arguments commend belief-manipulation. For it is awkward to suppose that God, if he exists, would value our trying to manipulate ourselves to have beliefs about him because of some pragmatic motive (for a discussion, see Jordan 2006, 146-148; Swinburne 2005, 128). However, it does not seem to be that awkward to suppose that God, if he exists, would value our honestly seeking him by relevant behaviour because of a pragmatic motive, and this is consistent with Jones's and Morris's views on the function of the wager argument.

3.3 REMARKS ON THE ETHICS OF BELIEF

Besides being an intrinsically problematic idea, believing or seeking by self-deceptive means to believe a proposition, which is not supported by one's evidence, strikes one as blameworthy conduct. This claim presupposes that there are some norms governing the acquisition, sustenance, and renunciation of beliefs, and so the claim is a take on the ethics of belief. In what follows, I will make some remarks on this topic. My purpose is not to offer a full-blown ethics of belief or an overview of this broad subject, but more moderately to pay attention to some considerations that are relevant for our discussion.⁴²⁸

To begin with, to argue that there are norms to be followed when acquiring, sustaining, and renouncing beliefs presupposes that beliefs are to some extent voluntary. We must have the capacity to control our beliefs so that we can fulfil our supposed doxastic responsibilities (ought implies can). The ongoing discussion clearly supports this assumption. Though beliefs are not under our direct voluntary control, we do have some indirect control over them. In other words, from a synchronic viewpoint we cannot but have the beliefs we in fact have, but from a diachronic viewpoint we can have some influence on which beliefs we hold. According to John Bishop, we have considerable control over the processes of inquiry that have an effect on our beliefs. For example, we can control the extent to which we seek out and pay attention to relevant evidence. Hence, we can be held responsible for having the beliefs we do, in fact, have.⁴²⁹

What is more, Bishop argues in reference to his distinction between holding and taking a proposition to be true (see section 3.1.2.) that besides being responsible for how we indirectly control our beliefs as mental states, it is necessary to recognise that we may have responsibilities for how we directly control what we take to be true in our practical reasoning.⁴³⁰ For example, a person may be blameable for carelessly acting on an inattentively held belief, whose propositional content the person would deem as lacking evidential support, were she to reflect on it.

Accordingly, in Bishop's view, at least, it is possible to have doxastic responsibilities at two different loci. This seems credible, although taking-to-be-true (and its relative acceptance) may actually have its own ethics, as it can be divorced from belief altogether. For one can take to be true what one does not believe true. However, though I will make a comment on the "ethics of taking-to-be-true" in the end of this section, I shall here primarily focus on the possible norms governing our belief-formation, that is, on the proper ethics of belief.

What kind of responsibilities may we have with respect to belief-forming practices? The most reputed ethics of belief is no doubt Evidentialism, and Clifford's principle is most likely the best-known description of this view. The principle declares that "it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to

⁴²⁸ For discussion on the ethics of belief, see e.g. Dole and Chignell (eds.) 2005; Chignell 2010.

⁴²⁹ Bishop 2007, 31. Cf. Pojman 1986a, 180.

⁴³⁰ Bishop 2007, 42.

believe anything upon insufficient evidence”.⁴³¹ Andrew Chignell remarks that despite the synchronic character of this principle, Clifford’s view is not just that we must be in a certain state at a certain time when we form a belief. Instead, he meant the principle to be understood diachronically, too, as governing our belief-related activities across time.⁴³²

For our needs, a diachronic description of Evidentialism is appropriate, since it best captures the way we can be held responsible for our beliefs. So, we may understand Evidentialism as follows:

(E) Beliefs ought to be formed, sustained, and renounced on the basis of adequate evidence.

Evidentialism may be defended in different ways, say, on moral or intellectual grounds,⁴³³ but even as such some version of it should look like an advisable principle. For while it may be hard to defend unconditional Evidentialism, it is, as Chignell says, even harder to defend the view that Evidentialism is inappropriate in every domain.⁴³⁴

It is of relevance to point out that if one central claim of this chapter is correct, that is, that non-evidential believing is not possible (see sections 3.1.3. and 3.2.1.), a specific type of Evidentialism seems to be unavoidable. As it was argued, given that belief aims at truth, a person can consciously believe that *p* only if she thinks she has some kind of truth-indicating evidence to support *p*’s truth. A claim similar to this one has been made by Jonathan Adler. He holds that “Evidentialism is the *intrinsic* ethics of belief—it is the ethics of belief imposed by the concept of belief itself.” Adler maintains that it a serious error to maintain that adherence to Evidentialism could be an option one can take rightly or wrongly, wisely or foolishly. For example, he says, from a first-person point of view a person cannot believe that he is handsome just for the reason that it will lessen his depression (which is a pragmatic motive). For lessened depression does not bear on the truth of whether he is handsome. Adler maintains that the “cannot” involved here is conceptual.⁴³⁵

While the above-mentioned “psychological Evidentialism”, as one might call it, may be unavoidable, it does not follow that we automatically fulfil the demands of (E). For example, a person can presumably form and sustain beliefs in less than full awareness by non-evidential factors (see section 3.1.3.), and in such cases she is clearly going against (E). Additionally, what a person from her viewpoint conceives as evidence relevant to her given belief may not, in fact, be adequate evidence at all, and in this case (E) is violated, too. Still, if

⁴³¹ Clifford 1879, 186.

⁴³² Chignell 2010, ch. 1.1..

⁴³³ Jordan holds that Evidentialism can be understood in an ethical or in an epistemic/intellectual sense. According to the ethical construal, persons should follow (E) because the consequences of no one following it would be disastrous. Jordan holds that this was Clifford’s position. Clifford holds that not following (E) would be a danger to society, and persons would become credulous, lose the habit of inquiry, and “sink back into savagery”. Clifford 1879, 185-186. According to the epistemic/intellectual construal of Evidentialism, (E) should be followed because not doing so makes one unreasonable, which is as such a bad thing. Jordan maintains that Hume and Locke espoused this view. See Jordan 2006, 42-44.

⁴³⁴ Chignell 2010, ch. 4.1..

⁴³⁵ Adler 2002, 2, 10.

a person finds herself believing that *p* even after careful reflection on her evidence for *p*, one might say that she is *prima facie* justified in believing that *p*, since she has reflected upon the issue and does have from her viewpoint some evidence for *p*.

Something along the lines of (E) is assumed in the claim made at the outset of this section, namely, that it is blameworthy to believe or try to believe by self-deceptive means something not warranted by one's overall evidence. But is (E) an absolute norm, as Clifford apparently held? The answer is most likely no. Sometimes it may be permissible to deviate from Evidentialism. Consider the following imaginary scenario, for example. Suppose a person is given a forced choice: she must either believe some proposition *p* that is widely considered to be false or else great harm will be done to the whole of humankind. In this case it seems that on moral grounds it is advisable for the person to try to believe that *p* by any possible means, even though this conduct clearly deviates from (E).⁴³⁶

Is it permissible to try to believe by deceptive means faith-propositions which one's overall evidence does not support? This, at any rate, is what pragmatic arguments for religious belief seek to show (see section 3.2.1.), and I will accordingly focus on them. Like moral reasons in the above example, pragmatic reasons for religious belief can presumably in some cases override (E). For example, a reflective religious doubter may think that she cannot live a meaningful and morally decent life without religious belief (say, belief that such a life leads to salvation).⁴³⁷ So, in order to live a meaningful and morally decent life, she is motivated to form the required belief even though the relevant proposition from her viewpoint lacks adequate evidential support. Because of the supposedly great benefit the belief would confer on the doubter (and perhaps on persons close to her), she may be within her rights in going against (E) and forming the relevant belief.

However, while pragmatic arguments for religious belief may in some cases permit deviation from (E), I would point to an alternative way to conceive pragmatic argumentation vis-à-vis religious matters, which does not typically require violating (E)—and which conveniently anticipates the subject of the next chapter. We have thus far supposed that pragmatic arguments commend having faith-belief because of the benefits thus possibly attained. My first complaint about this view is that it is too simplistic: pragmatic arguments are not best understood as commending mere faith-belief, but it is more accurate to take them to promote faith, which, as we have seen, implies more than belief. Something like this actually seems to be Jeff Jordan's position. He maintains that pragmatic arguments recommend not just belief but commitment to God, which in his view amounts to reorienting one's goals, values, and behaviour by including belief that God exists among one's central beliefs and values.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁶ Cf. Jordan 2006, 46–47.

⁴³⁷ Cf. Swinburne 2005, 129.

⁴³⁸ Jordan 2006, 18–19.

But whereas Jordan's reasoning suggests that pragmatic arguments promote having faith with belief, that is, having doxastic faith, and thus require violating (E), one might ask why faith without firm belief, that is, sub- or non-doxastic faith, would not suffice? This, in fact, is my suggestion: pragmatic arguments can be reinterpreted as supporting sub- or non-doxastic faith. As a simple example, consider the following revision of Nicholas Everitt's argument from solace (see section 3.2.1.): it is permissible to have some type of sub- or non-doxastic faith, because it can give meaning to one's life.⁴³⁹ A religious doubter does not firmly believe that propositions of faith are true, but she may nonetheless, say, believe that they are possibly true, and she may hold that permitting this possibility to have an impact in her cognitive and practical life would offer consolation and help overcome otherwise unavoidable desperation. Because of the supposed pragmatic benefits, the doubter may be justified in clinging to the possibility in question, which then amounts to having a kind of sub-doxastic faith.

There is at least one good aspect in conceiving pragmatic arguments as commending not doxastic faith or mere belief but sub- or non-doxastic faith. As the above example illustrates, normally a religious doubter who makes use of pragmatic arguments for sub- or non-doxastic faith need not seek to believe by self-deceptive means against her better epistemic judgement. Instead, as I am inclined to think, in most cases religious doubters who find faith an attractive alternative are already in a suitable cognitive state to exemplify some form of non-doxastic faith. Hence, pragmatic arguments for non-doxastic faith do not generally require violating (E), and so they are compatible with Evidentialism as understood here. One might also point out that pragmatic arguments for sub- or non-doxastic faith are compatible with the Pascalian understanding of the role of the arguments: exemplifying sub- or non-doxastic faith can be seen as the sort of behaviour which, as Thomas Morris has said, may put one "in a better epistemic position to access the evidence that does exist".⁴⁴⁰

I am not here seeking to offer an elaborated defence of pragmatic arguments for sub- or non-doxastic faith. However, if a religious doubter holds that she is better off by having some kind of sub- or non-doxastic faith and by having such faith she harms no one, I do not see any reason why it would not be permissible for her to have the faith in question. While it may not be advisable for the doubter to devote herself too much to her sub- or non-doxastic faith, to say that she is not entitled to it at all seems to be an overstatement. In Bishop's terminology my suggestion is actually an approach to the ethics of taking-to-be-true. My claim is that a person may on pragmatic grounds be entitled to tentatively take such propositions of faith to be true in her reasoning which she considers evidentially wanting and does not thus believe. This is the same as exemplifying a type of sub- or non-doxastic faith

⁴³⁹ Everitt 2004, 205-206.

⁴⁴⁰ Morris 1994a, 57, 60.

(see section 3.1.1.).⁴⁴¹ Different allegedly non-doxastic views of faith will be surveyed in the next chapter. They seek to illuminate what kind of propositional attitudes can take the place of firm belief in the cognitive aspect of faith.

⁴⁴¹ Concerning faith, Bishop appears to highlight the ethics of taking-to-be-true over the proper ethics of belief: “reflective believers’ concern for the justifiability of their faith-beliefs should be regarded primarily as a concern about whether it is *morally* justifiable to *take faith-beliefs to be true in one’s practical reasoning*. If that is correct, then Philosophy of Religion should not focus ultimately on the epistemic status of theistic faith-beliefs, but rather on the moral status of practical commitment to the truth of those beliefs.” Bishop 2007, 48. For further discussion, see Bishop 2007, 41-52. Bishop notes that, as regards rationality, Joshua Golding has argued for a similar shift from a focus on “having theistic beliefs” to “being a religious theist”, which entails a practical commitment. Bishop 2007, 48, n. 24. See Golding 2003. My claim is not this strong. My point is just that “having faith-belief” and “being a person of sub- or non-doxastic faith” may have different rationality conditions. A person may not be justified in having faith-belief but she may at the same time be justified in being a person of non-doxastic faith.

4 FAITH WITHOUT BELIEF

In the beginning of the previous chapter we noted a difficulty confronting reflective religious doubters who find the religious form of life an attractive alternative. Since it seems that in full awareness it is not possible to believe that p without some evidence for p , the doubter who finds the evidence for the propositions of faith wanting cannot believe these propositions. Although the aim of chapter 3 was to offer different solutions to this problem, the dilemma was in fact just further deepened. John Bishop's proposal that belief can be sustained by non-evidential, passional causes seems to be conceptually problematic, and the suggestion made in connection with pragmatic arguments that one can by deceptive means get oneself to believe something not warranted by one's evidence looks like a difficult task to complete. What is more, belief-manipulation (and non-evidential believing) go against the dominant ethics of belief, namely, Evidentialism. For a reflective religious doubter having faith with a strong belief, that is, having doxastic faith, does not look like a feasible alternative.

According to Louis Pojman, religious doubters have the unwelcome prospect of being denied the benefits of religious faith altogether or being labelled "immature theists", since faith with belief is, according to his conviction, generally regarded by the orthodoxy as the only way to be a genuine person of faith with the benefits of salvation. However, Pojman immediately asks, what is so important about belief anyway? May there not, he queries, be other propositional attitudes that are equally as effective as belief or at least adequate for the vital benefits of religion?⁴⁴² Several theistic philosophers, Pojman included, have answered affirmatively to this question. That is, these philosophers have sought to develop accounts of faith which do not allegedly entail belief of any kind. These non-doxastic accounts, as we have labelled them (see section 1.1.2.), are the subject of this chapter.

We have already analysed one account of faith without firm belief, namely, Swinburne's Pragmatist view of faith (see section 2.1.3.; see also Bishop's sub-doxastic model of faith in section 3.1.1.). However, in his view of faith Swinburne does not try to dispense with belief altogether, as he holds that the precondition for instantiating faith is the so-called weak belief (that is, the belief that the Christian creed is more probably true than any of its rival alternatives), and this is a sub-doxastic, "less-than-firm-belief" attitude. In this respect the views we shall analyse in this chapter deviate from that of Swinburne. For they seek to show that the prevailing propositional attitude in the cognitive aspect of faith need not be belief of any sort, since it can be a non-doxastic, "other-than-belief" attitude. This idea has impact on the issue of the voluntariness of the cognitive aspect of faith. If involuntary belief is not central

⁴⁴² Pojman 1986a, 214.

to the cognitive aspect of faith, may it be comprised of an attitude that is more readily subject to the will's choices?

In what follows, in section 4.1. I shall survey Robert Audi's suggestion that propositional faith, "faith that so-and-so", can be an adequate substitute for propositional belief in an account of faith. After that, in section 4.2. William Alston's view of acceptance in religious faith is analysed. Alston's definition of this attitude bears *prima facie* resemblance to Jeff Jordan's acceptance and John Bishop's taking-to-be-true (see sections 3.1.2. and 3.2.1.) but ultimately diverges from them in significant respects. In section 4.3. I shall evaluate Louis Pojman's account of faith with hope, and in section 4.4. I shall consider J. L. Schellenberg's view of what could be termed imagination-based faith. Schellenberg also speaks about propositional faith in his account, but his elaboration of the notion diverges from that of Audi. Lastly, I shall summarise some claims I have made in this study and offer some further reflections. I propose a view of faith which defends the propriety of hope for faith but diverges from Pojman's account.

4.1 AUDI ON PROPOSITIONAL FAITH

In many of his articles about the nature and rationality of religious faith, Robert Audi has argued for a view of faith which does not, he claims, entail belief. His discussion of this subject is multifaceted, but one of the key notions he elaborates is propositional faith, which he takes to be a distinct attitude from belief and a viable candidate for the cognitive aspect of faith. I will here focus on this side of Audi's thought. His views on propositional faith have remained relatively consistent throughout his career.⁴⁴³ I shall here mostly make use of Audi's book *Rationality and Religious Commitment* (2011), where he draws together and expands some of his previously published works. So, in the following I will analyse, firstly, how Audi conceives the nature of propositional faith and, secondly, this attitude's impact on the issue of the voluntariness of faith.

4.1.1 BETWEEN HOPE AND BELIEF: THE NATURE OF PROPOSITIONAL FAITH

If I have faith that God loves human beings, Audi claims, I have, in addition to a cognitive attitude, a certain positive disposition toward the truth of the proposition in question.⁴⁴⁴ By this positive disposition Audi appears to mean a favourable or positive evaluative attitude: "the point is (roughly) that faith that something will occur entails taking that to be a good thing".⁴⁴⁵ If a person disapproves of something's occurrence, Audi holds that she cannot have faith

⁴⁴³ See e.g. Audi 1991; 1992; 1993; 2003; 2011. See also Audi 2007; 2008.

⁴⁴⁴ Audi 2011, 54.

⁴⁴⁵ Audi 2011, 67.

that it will occur.⁴⁴⁶ This line of thought already illustrates one difference between propositional faith and belief: belief does not entail a positive evaluative attitude. For example, a person can believe that her colleague will be promoted without taking that to be a good thing. But if the person has faith that the colleague will be promoted, she must take that to be a positive thing. When applied to religious faith, propositional faith is, in our terminology, a mixture of the cognitive and the evaluative-affectual aspects of faith (on which, see section 1.1.2.), for it is both a cognitive and an evaluative attitude.

Audi maintains that propositional faith can include firm belief, but he is chiefly concerned with the sort of propositional faith that does not entail belief. He calls such faith fiducial faith,⁴⁴⁷ and this is what we will accordingly mean by propositional faith. Audi holds that this kind of propositional faith is easiest to see in everyday cases. His example is parents' having faith that their children will live up to their high ideals. If the ideals are truly high, living up to them is difficult. In Audi's view this can mean that the parents do not have here an attitude properly considered as flat-out (firm, strong, convinced) belief.⁴⁴⁸ Moreover, as should be clear by now, Audi maintains that propositional faith does not include belief of any kind: it does not involve flat-out belief, but neither does it comprise, say, weak or tentative belief. So, propositional faith is in Audi's view a non-doxastic attitude, though he acknowledges that some philosophers have spoken of degrees of belief in such a way that if one so much as takes a proposition to have any significant chance of truth, then one thereby believes it to some degree.⁴⁴⁹

While propositional faith does not entail belief of any kind, it is in Audi's view a cognitive attitude. But then it must presumably cohere with other cognitive attitudes. Audi affirms this. In his view faith that *p* can coincide with some degree of doubt about *p*, but it is incompatible with pervasive or dominating doubt and *a fortiori* with disbelief that *p*. Audi maintains that faith that *p* cannot coincide with any doubt sufficient to undermine a kind of trusting that *p* is true. In his view propositional faith is connected, though not identical, to what might be labelled propositional trust, "trusting that so-and-so". (The notion of propositional trust is interesting, but Audi does not analyse it further.) Audi argues that propositional faith is conviction-wise stronger than hope, which in his view is compatible with grave doubt.⁴⁵⁰ "When the strength of doubt that *p* is true reaches a certain level," Audi claims, "hope, but not faith, will probably be my attitude."⁴⁵¹ So, besides belief, Audi contrasts propositional faith with hope. Vis-à-vis certitude or confidence about a proposition's truth, propositional faith is somewhere between hope and firm belief: it is stronger than hope but weaker than belief.

⁴⁴⁶ Audi 2011, 74

⁴⁴⁷ Audi 2011, 71.

⁴⁴⁸ Audi 2011, 69.

⁴⁴⁹ Audi 2011, 54, 78-79.

⁴⁵⁰ Audi 2011, 54, 72-74.

⁴⁵¹ Audi 2011, 73.

Though propositional faith is confidence-wise weaker than belief, Audi holds that in other respects it can be a steadfast attitude. By this he appears to mean chiefly that unlike, say, tentative belief, propositional faith can survive in the face of counter-evidence of a certain kind; it can resist being given up. Audi also maintains that propositional faith can be a significant attitude to one's emotional life. He argues that faith has a tendency to remove or reduce negative emotions concerning the same object, such as fear, anxiety, depression, and anger. This, Audi maintains, is a manifestation of the sense in which faith that *p* is a kind of trusting that *p*.⁴⁵²

Audi has offered numerous further indications of what propositional faith is and how it contrasts with certain other attitudes. In his appraisal, William Alston has picked out several of Audi's characterisations of propositional faith. Alston's list is worth presenting here:

1. What propositional faith is not: (a) flat-out belief, (b) feeling of certitude, (c) being subject to mistake, (d) belief + a positive evaluation of object, (e) has a definitely accepted propositional object, (f) implies existence of object, (g) intellectual commitment to its propositional object, (h) tentative belief that *p*, (i) weak belief that *p*, (j) belief that *p* is probably true.
2. What propositional faith is: (a) incompatible with disbelief that *p*, (b) cognitive in having a propositional object, (c) sufficient to qualify one as religious where the propositional object is religious, (d) has a positive attitudinal aspect, (e) involves a disposition to believe that *p*, (f) can be strong and steadfast, (g) involves conviction, (h) requires belief other than belief that *p*, (i) is a positive attitude to a proposition, (j) implies a cognitive trust.
3. Weaker connections: (a) limits the degree of doubt that *p*, (b) is compatible with more doubt than belief of *p*, (c) requires less for justification or rationality than belief, (d) a weaker disposition than with belief to avow the proposition, make inferences from it, and act on its basis, (e) if *p* turns out to be false, there is more tendency to be surprised with belief than with propositional faith, (f) the closer we are to belief, the less natural it is to use "faith".
4. Similarities between propositional faith and belief: (a) cognitive in having a propositional object, (b) more or less rational, (c) influences behaviour, (d) varies in strength and in centrality.⁴⁵³

Some of these descriptions are already familiar to us. Some of the new characterisations, on the other hand, might seem problematic or at least in need of further elucidation. I will not comment on them at this point, however. The purpose of explicating them is merely to provide a context for Alston's criticism of Audi's view, to which we will turn next.

First of all, Alston claims that propositional faith is, in fact, close to belief, even flat-out belief. There are, he says, the similarities set out in 4(a)-4(d), and

⁴⁵² Audi 2011, 77-78.

⁴⁵³ Alston 2007, 124-125.

in his view conditions 3(a)-3(d) hold of belief, too. However, this is not Alston's central critique of Audi's view. His further criticism against Audi is that it seems impossible for any propositional attitude to fit all the mentioned specifications. Alston argues that the main tension concerns the relation of 2(i) to 1(e) and 1(g): how could something be a positive cognitive attitude without involving definite acceptance of a proposition and intellectual commitment to it? What is more, Alston says that 2(a) also seems to be in conflict with 1(e) and 1(g): why should propositional faith be incompatible with disbelief if it does not involve intellectual commitment and acceptance? One might also ask, for example, whether 1(b) and 2(g) are compatible: how could a propositional attitude lack certitude but involve conviction?

The adequacy of Alston's assessment depends on how acceptance and intellectual commitment is construed. Alston is aware of this, and this is why his chief dissatisfaction with Audi's view resides elsewhere.⁴⁵⁴ His main critique is simply that Audi has not succeeded in telling us what propositional faith actually is. Alston admits that Audi has said quite a lot about the similarities and dissimilarities propositional faith has to belief, what it is and is not compatible with, the dispositions it does and does not involve, and so on. But, Alston claims, we are still left in the dark as to what all this is true of.⁴⁵⁵ In Alston's view the only substantial hint we get is that propositional faith is a positive cognitive attitude towards a proposition (2i). Another partial hint is, Alston concedes, that propositional faith has a positive attitudinal aspect (2d), which Alston takes to refer to what we termed the positive evaluative attitude.⁴⁵⁶

I am not sure whether Alston's critique is completely reasonable. To me it seems that propositional faith is already quite well identified by the positive cognitive and evaluative attitude (2i and 2d), though it is instructive to add that as regards confidence about a proposition's truth the cognitive attitude is somewhere between hope and firm belief. In his reply to Alston, Audi just says that if Alston demands an ordinary near equivalent of propositional faith, he suggests that it is "trusting that" (cf. 2j).⁴⁵⁷ I would ask, however, why Audi hesitates to analyse propositional faith as a complex of partial belief, that is, belief of less than maximal degree, and a positive evaluative attitude (cf. 1d, 1h-j). To me this looks like the most natural explication of Audi's view, and this

⁴⁵⁴ Alston 2007, 126, 128-129. With respect to this critique of Alston, Audi answers as follows: "In one place, Alston says that one of my requirements (being incompatible with disbelief) also seems to be in conflict with the person's not having 'definitely accepted' *p* and not being intellectually committed to it. If (he wonders) [...] [propositional faith] involves no intellectual commitment to *p* and no definite acceptance of *p*, then why should it be incompatible with disbelief that *p*? The briefest way to answer this is to note that I have stressed that faith that *p* is stronger, in at least the convictional dimension, than hope. But even hoping that *p* is inconsistent with believing it false (disbelieving it) [Pojman disagrees; see section 4.3.1.]. As to *definite* acceptance of a proposition—as contrasted with, for instance, accepting it as a working hypothesis—I took that to imply belief." Audi 2007, 242.

⁴⁵⁵ Cf. Radcliffe 1995, 75.

⁴⁵⁶ Alston 2007, 126.

⁴⁵⁷ Audi 2007, 242.

description would likely dispel Alston's puzzlement as regards the nature of propositional faith.⁴⁵⁸

Analysing propositional faith as a degreed belief plus a positive evaluation would also block many of Dana Radcliffe's objections to Audi's view. Radcliffe's claim is, in short, that having faith that *p* actually entails belief that *p*: "'faith' implies, not an absence of belief, but an acknowledgement by the speaker that there are reasons for doubting the truth of the proposition, which he nevertheless believes—perhaps confidently."⁴⁵⁹ As such Radcliffe's proposal is problematic: it is questionable how one could confidently believe that *p* while simultaneously having doubts about *p*. But were one to say that faith that *p* partly consists of a degreed belief that *p*, this would be compatible with some amount of doubt about *p* and it would also be quite compatible with Radcliffe's view about the belief-entailing nature of propositional faith.

Audi, however, does not want to pursue this kind of reductionist strategy, as he calls it; he does not want to analyse propositional faith in terms of (partial) belief. According to him, we do not have faith that *p* by merely believing that *p* and having a positive evaluative attitude towards *p* (cf. 1d). He claims that a proponent of such a reductionist view would have to find an appropriate belief aspect and to show that this belief implies an appropriate evaluative attitude. Audi doubts whether either of these conditions can be met.⁴⁶⁰ However, the reductionist might reply as follows. Degreed belief is an appropriate belief aspect, and the demand that this belief must imply an evaluative attitude is too strong, for it is sufficient that the belief just happens to coincide with a positive evaluative attitude—then one has propositional faith.⁴⁶¹

According to the reductionist's construal, which I find appropriate, propositional faith is a sub-doxastic attitude, as it is taken to include a degreed belief. This is obviously at odds with Audi's claim that propositional faith is a non-doxastic attitude, that is, that it does not consist of belief of any kind. However, otherwise analysing propositional faith in reductionist terms would not necessarily challenge Audi's account in any substantial way. As I see it, propositional faith would still be a matter of having an attitude that is distinct from firm belief.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁸ See Alston 1992, 158.

⁴⁵⁹ Radcliffe 1995, 76.

⁴⁶⁰ Audi 2011, 79.

⁴⁶¹ Another reason why Audi claims that propositional faith does not reduce to propositional belief plus positive evaluation is that, unlike belief, faith is not truth-valued. According to him, if one believes that *p*, and then *p* turns out to be false, one's belief that *p* has been shown to be false or mistaken. But, he holds, if one has faith that *p*, and then *p* turns out to be false, one's faith that *p* has been shown to be, not false or mistaken, but misplaced and disappointed. Audi 2011, 75-76. I find Audi's view confusing and do not see any reason to deny that propositional faith is truth-valued. If I believe that *p*, and *p* turns out to be false, what has been shown to be false is not, strictly speaking, my belief that *p*—I doubt whether that is even a coherent idea—but the content of my belief, that is, *p*. The same goes for faith that *p*. And in both cases it seems to me that I could, in suitable contexts, speak about my belief/faith that *p* being mistaken, misplaced, or disappointed.

⁴⁶² Cf. Audi 2011, 86-87.

Returning to Alston's assessment, his critique against Audi is not only negative, but he seeks to fill the gap Audi's account in his view leaves open. That is, Alston seeks to offer a propositional attitude that is distinct from belief and can be the positive cognitive attitude (2i) of propositional faith. The attitude Alston has in mind is his version of acceptance. Incidentally, Alston, unlike Audi, opts for a kind of reductionist strategy in analysing the notion of propositional faith. He maintains that it can be, in essence, reduced to acceptance plus the positive evaluative attitude. Though Alston's view of acceptance will be analysed thoroughly in section 4.2., it is relevant to state it briefly here. Audi has answered Alston in a critical tone, and in his answer he offers insights into the voluntariness of propositional faith, which is our next topic.

4.1.2 THE VOLUNTARINESS OF PROPOSITIONAL FAITH

Alston holds that acceptance can be the positive cognitive attitude involved in propositional faith. He finds the voluntary character of the act of acceptance to be the best way of giving a preliminary idea of it. In his view the mental act of acceptance is the "adoption, the taking on of a positive attitude toward a proposition". Contrary to what seems to be, for example, Jeff Jordan's definition of acceptance (see section 3.2.1.), Alston claims that the positive cognitive attitude taken is more than just adopting a working assumption in the sense of acting as if a proposition were true. In its place, Alston argues, the attitude taken is very similar to, and yet distinct from, the one found in belief.⁴⁶³ For the moment it suffices to say about Alston's view that according to him, his voluntary acceptance meets many of Audi's characterisations of propositional faith, and so acceptance is in his view a suitable candidate to elucidate the nature of propositional faith (or, to be precise, the cognitive element of it).⁴⁶⁴

Audi is not convinced of Alston's suggestion. We will take a closer look at his key critique in section 4.2., where Alston's view is analysed. Here we are only interested in the voluntariness issue, and Audi is not satisfied with Alston's proposal on this point either. He argues that the term "accept" often implies a contrast with rejection and may then incorrectly suggest that forming propositional faith requires some voluntary act. But, Audi maintains, a person can have faith that *p* without having accepted *p* in the sense that requires an act of considering and adopting *p*. In Audi's view fiducial faith and trusting (in its propositional sense) are more appropriate terms for propositional faith than acceptance, because neither can be used to designate an act or an event and neither must be formed as a result of a voluntary act, as generally seems to hold in Alston's scheme. In the end, Audi straightforwardly says that there is surely no basic act by which we directly produce in ourselves propositional

⁴⁶³ Alston 2007, 132-133.

⁴⁶⁴ Alston 2007, 135.

faith, though what we do and behold in our mind can affect our fiducial attitudes.⁴⁶⁵ So, in Audi's view propositional faith is like belief in that it is not a directly voluntary propositional attitude.

How does one then acquire and sustain propositional faith in a given proposition? Audi has not said much about this issue. As to the acquisition, he seems to hold that though propositional faith, like belief, may typically arise as a result of exposure to evidence, it need not be a response to evidence in this way. Audi says that propositional faith "is not a causal notion in any sense precluding any particular kind of cause—or at any rate, not mere causation by evidence".⁴⁶⁶ As regards sustaining propositional faith, Audi's remark about the "fluidity of faith" is significant. In his view, the strength of propositional faith "may wax or wane with changes in such variables as emotionality, perceived evidence, and social support."⁴⁶⁷ This suggests that propositional faith is responsive to broadly evidential and emotional grounds and thus that it is, if not acquired, at least sustained by such grounds. This fits with the nature of propositional faith, as it is not just a cognitive but an evaluative attitude, too. Ultimately, however, Audi leaves questions concerning the acquisition of propositional faith somewhat open.

While propositional faith is not voluntary, Audi nonetheless assigns important tasks to the will in sustaining it. He argues that because faith that *p* is compatible with more doubt than firm belief that *p*, faith provides a place for, and sometimes calls for, the exercise of the will. To start with, Audi holds that one needs resolution to avoid being unsettled by apparent counter-evidences.⁴⁶⁸ By this he seems to mean that propositional faith requires the will's sustenance in order to survive through adversities. However, one might ask whether propositional faith is such an attitude that the will can have an effect on its persistence. Audi even speaks about propositional faith being in a sense self-sustaining: it can lead to its own strengthening by producing desires to support it.⁴⁶⁹ But if this is so, is there really a place for the will in sustaining propositional faith?

Audi holds that propositional faith requires the will in another way, too: one should take pains to do the things appropriate to one's faith, say, in central religious cases to do as God would have us do.⁴⁷⁰ This claim presumably amounts to the view that acting on one's propositional faith requires the will's exertion, since acting on an uncertain propositional attitude is harder than acting on an attitude that is certain, like firm belief. However, this remark does not so much concern the voluntariness of propositional faith *per se* (that is, as a propositional attitude) as acting on it. In our terms the point relates to the practical aspect of faith and seems to fundamentally amount to the claim

⁴⁶⁵ Audi 2011, 83–84.

⁴⁶⁶ Audi 2011, 59, 59 n. 11. Audi himself appears to be especially interested in religious experiences. In his view they may for some persons stand as grounds, that is, evidence, for theistic propositions. See Audi 2011, ch. 5.

⁴⁶⁷ Audi 2011, 80. See also Audi 2011, 59.

⁴⁶⁸ Audi 2011, 76.

⁴⁶⁹ Audi 2011 93.

⁴⁷⁰ Audi 2011, 76.

already detectable in, for example, Swinburne's and Bishop's accounts that the will is required in order to exemplify the practical aspect of faith (see sections 2.1.3. and 3.1.2.). In this case, too, Audi seems to argue that propositional faith has a self-sustaining character. He holds that since there are often actions one should perform to live up to one's faith, faith itself may motivate the action, and conversely doing the actions may confirm one's faith or nurture it.⁴⁷¹

Audi illustrates the self-sustaining nature of propositional faith with an example. Consider a person who has faith that her friend will recover from surgery. Audi holds that sustaining this faith amounts to doing such things as looking on the positive side of the illness; avoiding distraction and enticement to pursue additional commitments other than helping the friend and aiding her recovery if possible; and talking positively with other friends about the friend's predicament.⁴⁷² Similar points presumably go for propositional faith of a religious kind. For example, a person who has faith that there is a loving God who has offered salvation to humans presumably can strive to maintain her faith by simply trying to stay optimistic and doing things appropriate to the faith in question, such as attending services and meeting with like-minded persons.⁴⁷³

4.1.3 CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

In summary, Audi argues that besides flat-out belief there is another religiously significant attitude, namely, propositional faith. As regards confidence about the truth of a proposition, propositional faith is weaker than firm belief but stronger than hope. What is more, unlike mere belief (but like hope, as we shall see), propositional faith involves a positive evaluative attitude. Because of this, propositional faith covers besides the cognitive aspect of faith at least partly the evaluative-affectual aspect of faith. This kind of extensiveness is most likely a good thing in an attitude that is taken to be religiously relevant. In Audi's view propositional faith is not voluntary, and apparently it is responsive to broadly evidential and emotional factors. Audi holds that propositional faith can be fortified by engaging in activities it commends.

After all Audi has said about the attitude—and given Alston's and Radcliffe's critiques—propositional faith is in my view most naturally construed as a complex sub-doxastic propositional attitude, which consists of a degreed belief and a positive evaluative attitude. This goes against Audi's view that propositional faith is non-doxastic, that is, that it does not consist of a belief of any kind, but otherwise Audi's view would not probably be much challenged by this reductionist analysis. Furthermore, it may be interesting to note that especially in reductionist terms propositional faith is not far from

⁴⁷¹ Audi 2011, 93-94. Cf. Howard-Snyder 2013, 368.

⁴⁷² Audi 2011, 94.

⁴⁷³ Cf. Audi 2011, 55-56.

Alvin Plantinga's view of the attitudes relevant for faith. This point calls for some further elucidation.

According to Plantinga, faith ideally involves strong Christian belief as the cognitive aspect of faith and the right affections as the evaluative-affective aspect (see section 2.2.). As I see it, one could properly think of Audi's propositional faith as being basically similar to Plantinga's view, except the cognitive aspect of propositional faith is comprised of a confidence-wise weaker attitude than a strong belief. And, again, it would be tempting to say that the attitude in question is a degreed belief. So, maybe Audi's propositional faith can be seen as a less than ideal instantiation of the sort of faith Plantinga depicts—and perhaps it fits in Plantinga's overall scheme of things, too.

With this comparison in mind, consider the following quotation from Audi:

Fiducial faith [that is, propositional faith] may be what remains when certain people undergo a certain kind of intellectual change, especially where their confidence of the relevant propositions diminishes. Faith has a kind of fluidity: its strength may wax or wane with changes in such variables as emotionality, perceived evidence, or social support. To object that if people lose confidence in certain propositions in a way that precludes unqualified belief of the tenets of their religion, they cannot remain religious is to exaggerate the importance of the doxastic side of religious commitment. For people in this plight, fiducial faith may be thought to be a position of retreat; but it is not a position of surrender. And if it does not represent an *ideal* for faith, it is nonetheless a position from which ideal faith can develop.⁴⁷⁴

It would be natural to think that the ideal faith Audi refers to is something close to Plantinga's view.

4.2 ALSTON ON ACCEPTANCE IN RELIGIOUS FAITH

In the previous section we saw a glimpse of how Alston conceives the notion of acceptance, which in his view can be an appropriate propositional attitude for religious faith. In this section I shall analyse Alston's notion further and for clarifying purposes compare it with certain other conceptions of acceptance. Alston mentions that his view is mainly inspired by Jonathan Cohen's *An Essay on Belief and Acceptance* (1992), but, as he also notes, his way of putting the issue is his own. Indeed, as I shall point out, Alston's view diverges from that of Cohen in important respects. Alston has stated his view in his article "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith" (1996) and reaffirmed it in "Audi on Nondoxastic Faith" (2007), which is chiefly concerned with his critique and development of Audi's view of propositional faith (see section 4.1.).

4.2.1 VOLUNTARY ACCEPTANCE AS TRUE: THE NATURE OF ACCEPTANCE

Alston develops his notion of acceptance in reference to the notion of belief. We have already discussed Alston's view of belief in section 1.2.2.. Here it is

⁴⁷⁴ Audi 2011, 80. Audi's italics.

relevant to reiterate his list, which tells what sort of manifestations S's believing that p putatively entails:

- (1) If B_{sp} , then if someone asks S whether p, S will have a tendency to respond in the affirmative.
- (2) If B_{sp} , then if S considers whether p, S will tend to feel it to be the case that p with some degree of confidence.
- (3) If B_{sp} , then S will tend to believe propositions that she/he takes to follow from p.
- (4) If B_{sp} , then S will tend to use p as a premise in theoretical and practical reasoning where this is appropriate.
- (5) If B_{sp} , then if S learns that not-p, S will tend to be surprised.
- (6) If B_{sp} , then S will tend to act in certain ways that would be appropriate if it were the case that p, given S's goals, aversions and other beliefs.⁴⁷⁵

In Alston's view (2) illustrates the involuntary character of belief (5 seems to do it, too). By "feel" he seeks to convey the idea that occurrent belief possesses "immediacy", it is something one experiences rather than thinks out.⁴⁷⁶

As for acceptance, Alston holds that, unlike belief, it is a voluntary mental act of adopting or having a policy towards a proposition: "to accept that p is to 'take it on board,' to include it in one's repertoire of supposed facts on which one will rely in one's theoretical and practical reasoning and behaviour."⁴⁷⁷ The sort of policy adopted is in Alston's view a dispositional state which is for the most part similar to the one involved in believing. Alston holds that acceptance includes *mutatis mutandis* each of the conditions (1)-(6) with the exception of (2). Alston claims that lack of (2), that is, lack of feeling it to be the case, is the central feature that distinguishes acceptance from belief.⁴⁷⁸

Since (2) is excluded from acceptance, accepting that p does not entail believing that p. What is more, Alston argues that one cannot accept a proposition one believes (and no doubt *vice versa*). He holds that there is no point in accepting that p if one believes that p, for one who believes already has every disposition which acceptance would give her. However, Alston concedes that this incompatibility may hold true only of strong, flat-out beliefs. Beliefs of weaker strength may in his view require acceptance, since in this case the dispositions, say, to use p in one's reasoning and behaviour, are weaker and may require bolstering up by acceptance.⁴⁷⁹

In arguing that flat-out belief cannot go together with acceptance Alston is knowingly going against Cohen's account of acceptance. Cohen sees belief and acceptance as being compatible with each other. In Alston's terms, Cohen's view is, roughly, that believing equals nothing more than (2), whereas his

⁴⁷⁵ Alston 1996a, 4.

⁴⁷⁶ Alston 1996a, 5.

⁴⁷⁷ Alston 1996a, 8, 11.

⁴⁷⁸ Alston 1996a, 9. I am inclined to think that if (2) goes, then (5) goes, too. But nothing of great importance hinges on this correction, and hence we may dismiss it.

⁴⁷⁹ Alston 1996a, 10.

version of acceptance is tantamount to (4), which I take to imply (6).⁴⁸⁰ So, for example, if one is to use one's belief that *p* in one's practical reasoning, one must in Cohen's view accept that *p*. This means that, contrary to Alston's view, in Cohen's account there is a considerable overlap between beliefs and acceptances, given that persons often do use propositions they believe in their reasoning and action. One might note that Bishop's hold/take distinction (see section 3.1.2.) is basically the same as that of Cohen between belief and acceptance. In Bishop's account holding that *p* basically corresponds to (2) and taking *p* to be true matches with (4) and (6).

To illuminate Alston's view of acceptance further, let us consider one of his examples in which a person accepts a proposition he does not believe. The captain of the defensive team is trying to discover what play the opposing quarterback will call. From previous experience of playing against him, it seems to the captain most likely, but not certain, that the quarterback will call a plunge into the middle of the line by the fullback. Accordingly, the captain accepts that proposition and reasons from it in aligning the defence. In this case the captain does not believe that this is the play the quarterback calls, but he accepts it and thus proceeds on that basis.⁴⁸¹

On the face of it, Alston's example suggests that acceptance does not amount to much more than adopting an assumption for the sake of guiding action. However, this is an analysis Alston disagrees with, and at this point we come to the key difference between Alston's and Cohen's accounts of acceptance. Unlike Cohen, Alston highlights that accepting that *p* involves "a more positive attitude" toward a proposition than just making the assumption or hypothesising that *p*. Alston holds that "to accept that *p* is to regard it as true", whereas "one can *assume* or *hypothesize* that *p* [...] without taking any stand on truth value".⁴⁸² Presumably because of this emphasis, Alston argues that not any given proposition can be accepted, whatever the evidential situation. For example, Alston holds that the defensive captain could not have accepted that the quarterback will take the ball and run in the opposite direction.⁴⁸³ The reason for this "could not" is most likely that the proposition in question is in the captain's view very implausible. Consequently, it seems to me that in Alston's view acceptance is, though voluntary, evidence-dependent: in order to accept that *p* one must have some evidence for *p*.⁴⁸⁴ This proviso does not apply to Cohen's account. In his view reasons for acceptance can be

⁴⁸⁰ "First then, and very briefly, belief that *p* is a disposition, when one is attending to issues raised, or items referred to, by the proposition that *p*, normally to feel it true that *p* and false that *not-p*, whether or not one is willing to act, speak, or reason accordingly. But to accept the proposition or rule of inference that *p* is to treat it as given that *p*. More precisely, to accept that *p* is to have or adopt a policy of deeming, positing, or postulating that *p*-i.e. of including that proposition or rule among one's premisses for deciding what to do or think in a particular context, whether or not one feels it to be true that *p*." Cohen 1992, 4. See also Cohen 1992, 8-11.

⁴⁸¹ Alston 1996a, 10.

⁴⁸² Alston 1996a, 11.

⁴⁸³ Alston 1996a, 11.

⁴⁸⁴ Alston leaves it unclear just how much evidence for *p* is needed so that one can accept that *p*.

merely “ethical, professional, prudential, religious, aesthetic, or otherwise pragmatic instead of evidential”.⁴⁸⁵

Alston argues that acceptance can take the place of belief in religious faith. In his view many Christians do not find themselves with such an assurance that goes with flat-out belief that the Christian doctrines are true. While Alston admits that these persons may less than fully believe the doctrines, he argues that another alternative is that they accept them, which is “to perform a voluntary act of committing oneself to them, to resolve to use them as a basis for one’s thought, attitude, and behavior”.⁴⁸⁶ Alston also accentuates that accepters can be as fully involved in the Christian life as those who believe firmly, for acceptance is not in his view a matter of make-believe, pretence, or resolving to act as if the doctrines were true. Instead, he holds, “to *accept* the doctrines is to *accept* them as true”.⁴⁸⁷ As we saw, Alston maintains that one cannot accept a proposition one takes to be improbable. This means that a person must presumably have some evidence for the truth of the doctrinal propositions so that she can accept them as true. However, otherwise the motivational grounds to accept the doctrines can probably be at least partly pragmatic ones, as Alston appears to indicate.⁴⁸⁸

It may be enlightening to note that in our terms Alston’s acceptance actually seeks to cover two aspects of faith: the cognitive and the practical.⁴⁸⁹ On the practical side there is the detectable resolution to act on the doctrinal propositions. On the cognitive side there is accepting the propositions as true, which seems to be the main reason why in Alston’s view possible acceptances are restricted by one’s evidential situation. In comparison, Cohen’s acceptance, if applied to religious faith, is best seen as covering merely the practical aspect of faith (cf. Bishop’s taking-to-be-true in section 3.1.2.). This is because his acceptance does not include the Alston-type of “accept as true” but is mainly a matter of adopting a proposition among one’s premises for deciding what to do in relevant situations.

Alston presumably departs from Cohen’s account of acceptance just because it lacks the “accept as true” condition, making it thus in his view cognitively too weak an attitude for religious faith. This is Hamid Vahid’s interpretation of Alston’s motives. Vahid holds that on Cohen’s account it is possible to accept that *p* while believing that not-*p*. So, Vahid continues, were Alston to go with Cohen’s account, he should be prepared to allow such non-realist positions as Don Cupitt’s Christian humanism to count as genuine instances of faith (on theological non-realism, see the introduction). But, Vahid maintains, “this may not be congenial to Alston’s realist view of religious faith”, and this, he holds, is perhaps the reason why Alston beefs up Cohen’s notion of acceptance with the “accept as true” condition.⁴⁹⁰ Vahid’s

⁴⁸⁵ See e.g. Cohen 1992, 20.

⁴⁸⁶ Alston 1996a, 16-17.

⁴⁸⁷ Alston 1996a, 17-18.

⁴⁸⁸ See Alston 1996a, 17.

⁴⁸⁹ Cf. Schellenberg 2005, 144-145.

⁴⁹⁰ Vahid 2009, 28.

interpretation is plausible given how Alston also strongly contrasts accepting as true with make-believing, pretending, and acting as if (see above).

Alston holds that recognition of voluntary acceptance helps to resolve some difficulties surrounding religious faith. To begin with, he maintains that worries about “lack of faith”, when it means lack of involuntary belief, can be alleviated by noticing that in this case volitional acceptance is an alternative. Alston maintains that if one finds it impossible to believe that the Christian doctrines are true, one can nonetheless accept them, provided that one takes there to be sufficient reasons for doing so. Alston argues that acceptance can also explain how religiously relevant merit can be attached to the cognitive aspect of faith: since acceptance, unlike belief, is (directly) voluntary, accepting the Christian doctrines can be meritorious.⁴⁹¹ This, however, is a simplistic view of the voluntariness and meritoriousness of Christian belief. Swinburne, for example, argues that the will can indirectly have an influence on our beliefs, and this is enough to make believing subject to merit or blame. In addition, even if the cognitive aspect of faith is not voluntary, the practical aspect can be that, and merit can be attached to exemplifying it, as Swinburne argues (for a discussion see sections 2.1.2. and 2.1.3.; see also 3.3.).

Alston’s impression is that a significant proportion of contemporary Christians are accepters rather than believers.⁴⁹² In his view this has not been noticed, because the term “belief” has been allowed to spread over any positive propositional attitude. More precisely, he holds that “belief” has been used to apply indifferently to both proper belief and acceptance.⁴⁹³ I suppose that there is some truth in Alston’s general claim about the inflated use of “believe”, but it is not clear to me whether his notion of acceptance picks out one propositional attitude that is distinct from belief. There are some difficulties attached to Alston’s account. These difficulties are the topic of the next section.

4.2.2 PRAGMATIC AND COGNITIVE ACCEPTANCE

In order to see the problems in Alston’s account of acceptance, we need to draw distinctions between different types of acceptances. But before doing that, let us consider another critique of Alston’s view put forth by Vahid. His contention is that the examples Alston offers to support belief/acceptance distinction can be re-described in terms of degrees-of-belief without loss, and thus acceptance is a superfluous propositional attitude. Consider the previous case of the defensive captain. Alston argues that the captain, while not being certain, accepts that the quarterback will call a plunge into the middle of the line by the fullback. However, in Vahid’s view one could just as well say that the captain believes this proposition to a certain degree and proceeds on that

⁴⁹¹ Alston 1996a, 24-26.

⁴⁹² “I have no direct statistical evidence to establish this”, says Alston and bases his conviction on “faith stories of philosophers” in Clark 1993 and Morris 1994b. Alston holds that in these books some philosophers’ descriptions point to the direction that they fall in the accepters’ rather than in the believers’ group. See Alston 1996a, 18-19.

⁴⁹³ See Alston 1996a, 18, 20-21.

basis. And the same point goes for accepting theological doctrines. Vahid's upshot is thus that "at least as far as Alston-type examples are concerned, no convincing case has been made for the necessity of postulating the attitude of acceptance".⁴⁹⁴

Without going into details, suppose Vahid is right in claiming that Alston's acceptance is not necessarily required in order to explain certain behaviour without a firm belief. To this Alston might simply reply that this was not even his claim. Alston appears to argue that people may in relevant cases either believe weakly or accept—both of these are real alternatives.⁴⁹⁵ So, while Alston's acceptance may not be a necessary postulate, this point as such does not count against the reality of the attitude. However, there are other reasons to suspect the cogency of Alston's view. Audi has claimed, contrary to Alston's central assertions, that Alston's acceptance is not voluntary and it typically implies belief. In order to understand Audi's critique, we need further distinctions between different kinds of acceptances.

Audi holds that in Alston's scheme one could apparently consider a theological proposition, then accept it, and thereby enter into a state of acceptance of the proposition that is an instance of non-doxastic faith. Audi proposes calling the posited act behavioural acceptance and the resulting state cognitive acceptance.⁴⁹⁶ But I suggest that we make yet a further distinction. For want of a better name, the posited act may be called in Audi's terms behavioural acceptance (b-acceptance), which I take to be the mere momentary voluntary act of taking a proposition aboard. However, contrary to Audi's suggestion, the resulting state is twofold: there is cognitive and pragmatic acceptance (c- and p-acceptance). C-acceptance stands for the cognitive "accept as true" part of Alston's acceptance; p-acceptance equals the readiness to use the accepted proposition in reasoning and action.⁴⁹⁷ We can thus say that in Alston's view it is possible to enter by way of volitional b-acceptance into the states of c- and p-acceptance. For example, via a voluntary act of acceptance (b-acceptance) a person may come to accept as true that a co-worker of hers has made coffee (c-acceptance) and proceed on this basis to the recreation room to get it (p-acceptance).

Given our definitions, Audi's critique against Alston can be now described as follows. To begin with, Audi seems to treat it as obvious that b-acceptance can yield p-acceptance. He says that we can voluntarily accept a hypothesis by forming an intention to act on it, and we can voluntarily call the hypothesis to mind in contexts where it is pertinent to action. This outline is somewhere in the neighbourhood of Cohen's acceptance, and so we can say that Audi agrees with Cohen's view. However, though Audi maintains that b-acceptance can

⁴⁹⁴ Vahid 2009, 23-26.

⁴⁹⁵ Alston 1996a, 17-18.

⁴⁹⁶ Audi 2011, 81.

⁴⁹⁷ Previously we noted that Alston's acceptance, when applied to doctrinal propositions, covers both the cognitive and the practical aspects of faith. Given the distinctions just made, one can say that c-acceptance pertains to the cognitive aspect of faith, whereas p-acceptance has to do with the practical aspect.

yield p-acceptance, he doubts whether one can enter via volitional b-acceptance into the state of c-acceptance. His ultimate claim in this respect seems to be that just as we cannot produce beliefs at will, we do not have direct voluntary power to produce the truth-valued cognitive attitude of c-acceptance.⁴⁹⁸

Why does Audi maintain that b-acceptance cannot yield c-acceptance? The reason for this appears to be that he sees c-acceptance as being very similar to belief. Audi seems to argue that coming to c-accept that p either implies or is equal to forming the belief that p, and so c-acceptance either cannot exist without belief or reduces to belief. What is more, Audi seems to think that, like forming a belief that p, c-accepting that p is an involuntary event. For example, he says, if you tell me something controversial and I accept what you say, "accept" here seems to designate something like my not resisting, say, by asking for further evidence, and my cognitive system's responding in my forming the appropriate attitude, which in this case is normally belief.⁴⁹⁹ As a result, in Audi's view c-acceptance is, contrary to Alston's claim, involuntary and it either entails belief or reduces to belief. If c-acceptance reduces to belief, it is not a non-doxastic but a doxastic attitude.

Vahid has argued against Alston in a way comparable to that of Audi. His conclusion is that Alston's acceptance or especially c-acceptance turns out to be a species of belief: it is a truth-directed state very much like belief and equally involuntary.⁵⁰⁰ In Vahid's view c-acceptance is clearly a doxastic attitude. In this respect I would also point out how in Alston's view c-acceptance is, like belief, evidence-dependent. To me Audi's and Vahid's critiques against Alston seem quite credible. Even if there is such a propositional attitude as Alston's c-acceptance that is distinct from belief, it in any case appears to behave much like and coincide only with belief. So, it is not clear whether Alston's version of voluntary acceptance can be a viable substitute to belief in the cognitive aspect of faith. In the end, Alston's notion of acceptance may be simply confused, as John Bishop suspects. Bishop is inclined to think that Alston's departure from Cohen's understanding of acceptance is a mistake.⁵⁰¹ After Audi's and Vahid's critiques against Alston I am ready to concur with Bishop's suggestion.

4.2.3 CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

According to Alston, as I construed his view, a person can by way of a volitional act of accepting a proposition (b-acceptance) enter into a twofold state of accepting it as true (c-acceptance) and accepting it as a premise in one's reasoning and action (p-acceptance). But, as we saw, this account of acceptance is problematic. The central difficulty lies in the idea of evidence-

⁴⁹⁸ Audi 2011, 81-82.

⁴⁹⁹ Audi 2011, 82.

⁵⁰⁰ Vahid 2009, 28-29.

⁵⁰¹ Bishop 2007, 34 n. 12.

dependent “accept as true”, that is, in the notion of c-acceptance. It does not seem to be a voluntary non-doxastic attitude, as Alston claims, but an involuntary doxastic attitude. Or even if it is a non-doxastic attitude, it seems to presume a doxastic attitude, namely, belief. As a result, Alston’s acceptance does not seem to be a viable alternative to belief in religious faith.

There is, however, another rather trivial sense of “accept as true” according to which one can voluntarily accept as true propositions, whether believed or not. Such non-doxastic acceptance, let us name it c*-acceptance, might be described as an embracement of a proposition merely for the sake of its truth and not, say, for the sake of its practical impact, as in p-acceptance. For example, a person may c*-accept that extra-terrestrial intelligence exists even though her evidence for this proposition is inconclusive and even though the person does not have any inclination to use the proposition in her reasoning and behaviour. That is, the person accepts the proposition merely for the sake of its truth; she c*-accepts it. A notion of acceptance as true similar to this one has been elaborated by Raimo Tuomela and Raul Hakli.⁵⁰²

The difference between c*-acceptance and Alston’s c-acceptance is that the former, unlike the latter, is not evidence-dependent. One can c*-accept just about any proposition one wants, for evidence is only a rationality requirement for c*-acceptance.⁵⁰³ It follows that c*-accepting that p is compatible with believing that not-p, and Alston wanted to exclude precisely this possibility by his stronger notion of acceptance (see Vahid’s assessment in section 4.2.1.). So, c*-acceptance is not what Alston has in mind by his c-acceptance. As such c*-acceptance will not probably suffice for the cognitive aspect of faith. But, for example, for a person whose belief in the doctrinal propositions is frail, categorically c*-accepting the propositions can perhaps bring some stability to her cognitive commitment.

4.3 POJMAN AND FAITH WITH HOPE

Louis Pojman has argued that for religious doubters hope may be a sufficient substitute for belief in faith: hope is enough for exemplifying a type of “experimental faith”. Pojman’s view has been influenced by James Muyskens’ thought, who has also defended the suitability of hope for religious faith.⁵⁰⁴ I shall here follow Pojman’s account because he has explicitly discussed hope and faith with hope from the voluntariness viewpoint. In what follows, I will first survey Pojman’s view on the phenomenology of hope and secondly

⁵⁰² See Hakli 2006, 288-289; Tuomela 2000.

⁵⁰³ This point has been made by Hakli: “For this kind of acceptance as true to be held rational, it should respect the evidence available for the agent. In this sense acceptance as true is similar to belief, but while for beliefs responsiveness to evidence is sometimes taken to be a necessary requirement, for acceptance it is merely a rationality requirement. It is conceptually and factually possible for us to accept a proposition *not p* even though we think that we have more evidence for *p* than against it.” Hakli 2006, 289.

⁵⁰⁴ See Pojman 1986a, 247 n. 5. See e.g. Muyskens 1974a; 1974b; 1979; 1980. See also Jordan 2006, ch. 6.

analyse his view of faith with hope or, as I shall eventually call it, faith with motivational hope. At the same time I shall begin to elaborate the view of faith with hope I prefer, namely, faith as propositional hope, which will be further discussed in section 4.5.. Pojman's view has not changed considerably over the years.⁵⁰⁵ I will use as a main source his mature article "Faith, Doubt and Hope or Does Faith Entail Belief?" (2003).

4.3.1 THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF HOPE

Pojman distinguishes several salient features of hoping, and he validates them by means of examples. Our aim in this connection is not to give a full account of all the possible nuances of hoping but to explicate such features of it that are relevant to the discussion on faith with hope.⁵⁰⁶ So, with that in mind, Pojman first of all argues that hope that *p* includes—as a minimum cognitive requirement, I would add—the belief that *p* is possible. In Pojman's view we can only wish, not hope, for what we believe to be impossible. For example, Steve may hope that the languishing Chicago Cubs won their game against the awesome Atlanta Braves yesterday, if he does not know the score of the game yet. But if Steve knows that the Cubs lost yesterday, he can merely wish that they had won.

Secondly, Pojman argues that hope precludes certainty. He maintains that it would be odd to say that "Steve knows that the Cubs won yesterday, but he still hopes that they won". Pojman also refers to Paul in Romans (8:24): "For hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for?" In terms of subjective probabilities, Pojman holds that if *S* hopes that *p*, *S* must deem that $0 < P(p) < 1$.⁵⁰⁷ In Pojman's view the probability one assigns to a proposition is the degree to which that proposition is believed: $0.5 < P(p) < 1$ equals some degree of positive belief that *p*; $P(p) = 0.5$ equals agnosticism; and $0 < P(p) < 0.5$ equals some degree of disbelief that *p*, that is, belief that not-*p* (see section 1.2.2.).⁵⁰⁸ Hence, Pojman's view of the relationship between belief and hope can be explicated as follows. Hoping that *p* is compatible but does not necessarily require belief that *p*.⁵⁰⁹ Hoping that *p* is also compatible with non-belief that *p* (that is, agnosticism about *p*). But even this is not a necessary requirement, for hoping that *p* can occur with belief that not-*p*, too. According to Pojman's account, Steve may after probability calculations and before knowing the score believe that the Cubs lost yesterday and yet hope that they won—on condition that he believes that the Cub's victory is possible, of course.

⁵⁰⁵ See Pojman 1986a; 1986b; 2001; 2003.

⁵⁰⁶ For a historical and systematic analysis on hope, see Day 1991.

⁵⁰⁷ Pojman 2003, 543-544.

⁵⁰⁸ Pojman 2003, 536-537.

⁵⁰⁹ I suppose one might query the compatibility of hope and belief or certain belief, at the very least. Something like this might be Audi's suggestion. His view appears to be that confidence-wise hope is below propositional faith, which again is below firm belief (see section 4.1.1.). So, according to Audi's scheme, if a person has a firm belief that *p*, her confidence-level is such that it seems to exclude hope that *p*. By the same token, Audi would presumably argue that propositional faith and hope are not compatible.

Thirdly, Pojman holds that hoping involves a desire or a pro-attitude for the thing hoped to be true (we shall speak about a desire only).⁵¹⁰ The object of the desire is the propositional content of the hope in question. Fourthly, Pojman argues that the desire involved in hoping must be motivational. If a person hopes that *p*, Pojman says, in the right circumstances she will do what she can to bring it about that *p* or, as I would rather say, she will do whatever she can to make *p*'s occurrence more likely. For example, if Ryan hopes that he will get an A in his difficult philosophy course, he will study hard to earn this grade.⁵¹¹ Similarly, if a person hopes that she will win the lottery, she will do the lotto. This course of action will improve the person's possibilities of winning (only marginally, of course), although there is nothing the person can do to make it the case that she will, in fact, win. It should be pointed out that not all hopes are motivational in the discussed sense, for some hopes do not seem to arouse any significant action. There is not much Steve can do in order to make it more likely that the Cubs actually won yesterday, but surely he can still hope that the Cubs won their game.

Fifthly, Pojman argues that hoping, unlike believing, is typically under our voluntary control. In his view I may decide to hope that the Cubs will win, whereas I cannot decide to believe this. On the other hand, Pojman says that a person may or may not be able to give up a hope, but she is able to alter the degree to which she hopes for something. By this Pojman appears to actually mean that a person can decide whether and how much to invest in or pursue her hopes.⁵¹² But this point about voluntariness of hope seems to apply only to hopes that are motivational, that is, hopes which involve seeking to make the thing hoped for more likely to occur. For example, Ryan may find that his hope that he will get an A is preoccupying him to the point of distraction, and so he may decide to study less and thus in a sense hope less. Presumably, Ryan can also stop studying entirely, in which case it seems that he has stopped hoping altogether (likewise, if a person does not do the lotto, she cannot be said to hope that she will win). Then again, if Ryan decides to start studying again, it seems that he has begun to hope again.

As Ryan's example illustrates, hope that *p* which is motivational in the discussed sense seems to be constituted by seeking to make *p*'s occurrence more likely by a certain action. Since the decision to act and the consequent conduct are in most cases voluntary, we can say that hopes which are motivational are largely voluntary. Such hopes can be labelled simply motivational hopes. The constitutive aspect in motivational hopes is that an attempt is made to make the object of the hope more likely to occur. The motivational hope that *p* thus amounts to seeking to make *p*'s occurrence more probable. A person cannot be said to motivationally hope that *p* lest she somehow seeks to make it more probable that *p*, for example, as in the above

⁵¹⁰ This does not mean that it is not possible to hope that something is false, in which case one has a desire that something is false.

⁵¹¹ Pojman 2003, 544. Cf. Day 1991, 56

⁵¹² Pojman 2003, 544-545.

examples, by studying or by doing the lotto. Since motivational hope is constituted by action, it is by all appearances a non-doxastic attitude.

However, while motivational hopes may be voluntary, there appears to be another kind of hope that is largely involuntary. J. L. Schellenberg apparently has this type of hope in mind. He argues that the propositional hope that *p* is a complex state consisting in belief that *p* is “in some respect good or at any rate possible” and desire which is defined as being “disposed to experience a felt attraction to it [that is, *p*] in suitable circumstances” (cf. Pojman’s first and third condition). And Schellenberg maintains that both belief and desire are involuntary.⁵¹³ I am inclined to think that some hopes are like Schellenberg describes, and I would give Steve’s hope that the Cubs won their game yesterday as an example. Following Schellenberg, this kind of hope could be labelled propositional hope, since constitutive to such hope is a certain complex propositional attitude and not a certain action, as in motivational hoping.⁵¹⁴ Since propositional hope is typically constituted partly by a less-than-firm-belief, it is a sub-doxastic attitude.

There is another reason why the term “propositional hope” is appropriate here, for this sort of hope is functionally akin to Audi’s propositional faith. The attitudes in question are comparable: both of them involve a cognitive aspect and a positive evaluative aspect.⁵¹⁵ The main difference between propositional hope and propositional faith is that the cognitive aspect of hoping is weaker than that of propositional faith. The minimal cognitive constituent of propositional hope that *p* is belief that *p* is possibly true, which in Audi’s view is probably insufficient for having faith that *p*. It is presumably this kind of propositional hope Audi has in mind when he says that as a person’s strength of doubt that *p* reaches a certain level, the hope that *p* instead of faith that *p* will be her attitude (see section 4.1.1.).

Propositional hopes presumably arise, persist, and vanish in response to broadly evidential and emotional considerations or circumstances (cf. Audi’s view on the acquisition and sustenance of propositional faith in section 4.1.2.). If I hear that a dear friend of mine has been in what sounds like a terrible accident, this would quite automatically trigger in me the propositional hope that she is alright. If I later learn that she feels well, my hope will fade, as I now believe happily that she is alright. Propositional hopes may promote some action (for example, I may want to take care of my supposedly injured friend), but they are not, like motivational hopes, constituted by an action. Unlike motivational hopes, a propositional hope can persist even if one does not act in accordance with it. At times there may not even be any relevant action to do.

⁵¹³ Schellenberg 2005, 142.

⁵¹⁴ Motivational hoping is propositional, too, but the point is that the *sine qua non* for motivational hoping is a certain action and not some complex propositional attitude, as in proper propositional hope. One might point out that whereas motivational hopes are not far from volitions, propositional hopes resemble emotions.

⁵¹⁵ For some contrasts Audi draws between faith and hope, as he sees it, see Audi 2011, 73-74.

Pojman has not apparently acknowledged the distinction between motivational and propositional hopes, which, it is to be granted, may not be clearcut. Still, not recognising the distinction is probably the reason why Pojman incorrectly conceives hoping to be mostly voluntary. For the same reason Schellenberg presumably mistakenly conceives hoping mostly involuntary. But, as I argued, it is more plausible to think that motivational hopes, which amount to seeking to make something more likely, are mainly voluntary, whereas propositional hopes, which amount to a complex propositional attitude, are involuntary. This rather lengthy digression into motivational and propositional hopes is relevant to the discussion on faith with hope.

Returning to Pojman's analysis of the phenomenology of hope, he argues, sixthly, that hoping, like wanting, is evaluative in a way that believing is not, and in his view we may have morally unacceptable hopes but not beliefs. Pojman's point seems to be that since hope, unlike belief, involves a desire for the thing hoped to be true, only hopes can be morally appraised (on the other hand, see the discussion on the ethics of belief in section 3.3.).⁵¹⁶ Perhaps this is correct in this specific sense. For example, there does not seem to be anything morally wrong in believing that a friend will not survive her illness, if it really looks like that on the evidence at hand. But things may be otherwise if one propositionally and especially motivationally hopes for this outcome. If I motivationally hope that my friend will not survive, I am seeking to bring about this state of affairs, and this is no doubt questionable conduct. On the other hand, if I propositionally hope that my friend will not survive, this may also be blameworthy, even though I may not be able to cease to hope this and might even be ashamed of my hope. One might blame me for having formed my character poorly if I find myself propositionally hoping bad things to happen to my friends.⁵¹⁷ Incidentally, this example illustrates that in some cases the same proposition can be both propositionally and motivationally hoped for.

Lastly, Pojman makes a distinction between ordinary and deep hope. He argues that when a person is disposed to risk something significant on the possibility of the proposition hoped to be true, she has deep or profound hope. When the risk involves something of enormous value, Pojman says, it may be called desperate hope. Pojman's example of deep hope is a person betting her last few dollars on an unlikely winning horse in order to get the required money for important later use. Such a person, Pojman holds, trusts in and commits herself to the horse in question; in Pojman's view the person has a deep hope that the horse will win.⁵¹⁸ However, given the distinction between motivational and propositional hopes, I would analyse this example more explicitly as follows. Firstly, by betting on the horse the person has the motivational hope that she will get the required money. This is the desired

⁵¹⁶ Pojman 2003, 545. Cf. Day 1991, 76-77.

⁵¹⁷ Cf. Day 1991, 77.

⁵¹⁸ Pojman 2003, 545.

state of affairs the person is seeking to make more probable by the bet. Secondly, the person most likely has a propositional deep hope that the horse will win, which is aroused by the monetary investment and the overall situation.

In sum, Pojman argues that hoping that *p* includes at least the belief that *p* is possible and precludes certainty about *p*'s truth. In addition, in Pojman's view hoping involves a desire for the thing hoped to be true, and the desire must be motivational—when it can be that, one must add. While Pojman also holds that hoping is largely voluntary, I argued that only motivational hopes, which are largely constituted by doing a certain action, are best seen as such. Propositional hopes, which are complex propositional attitudes, are not usually voluntary. Still further, Pojman maintains that hoping can be morally evaluated in a way that believing cannot, and it can be ordinary, deep, or even desperate.

4.3.2 FAITH WITH MOTIVATIONAL HOPE

How does hope function as regards religious faith? The way Pojman sees faith with hope taking place can be described succinctly in the following way. First of all, in Pojman's view a religious doubter must conceive of God's existence and life after death from a desiderative viewpoint as something delightful and their alternative, that is, no God and no life after death, as not very welcoming. Secondly, according to Pojman, the doubter must hold that "there is just enough evidence to whet his or her appetite, to inspire *hope*, a *decision to live according to theism or Christianity as an experimental hypothesis*, but not enough evidence to cause belief".⁵¹⁹ Pojman maintains that having faith is, in essence, a commitment to something, say, a person, hypothesis, or religion.⁵²⁰ Consequently, if the religious doubter decides to commit herself to Christianity by means of living according to it, she has in Pojman's view decided to have faith with hope.

Pojman has compared the decision to have faith with hope to that of choosing a live hypothesis in William James's sense (see the introduction). Pojman holds that James is right when he says that the relevant hypothesis must be a psychologically live hypothesis. But where Pojman differs from James—or his construal of James—is that in his view it is not "necessary to get oneself to believe that the hypothesis is true in order to choose it in a profound way".⁵²¹ For in Pojman's view choosing and adequately living by a live hypothesis is realisable with hope. I find Pojman's reconstruction of James in outline appropriate (cf. the appraisal of Bishop's model of faith in section 3.1.3.). But his account of faith with hope requires further elucidation. I have two remarks.

⁵¹⁹ Pojman 2003, 547. My emphasis.

⁵²⁰ Pojman 2003, 537.

⁵²¹ Pojman 1986a, 228-229.

Firstly, Pojman clearly implies that hoping begins when a doubter decides to commit herself to Christianity and live according to it (see the quotation above). This indicates that for Pojman of chief importance as regards having faith is motivational hope, since such hoping is constituted by action. But what is the doubter motivationally hoping for here? Pojman is not explicit in this respect, but I assume that the content of the doubter's hope is that she will achieve the goals possibly attained by the commitment to Christianity (say, salvation). The doubter holds that by the commitment she will improve her chances of attaining the goals, although there is clearly nothing she can do in order to make it the case that she, in fact, achieves them, for that will depend on whether the goals are real and there to be had.

My second comment on Pojman's view has to do with the precondition for being in a situation to decide to have Pojmanian faith with motivational hope. As the comparison with James reveals, Pojman maintains that a prerequisite for choosing faith with motivational hope is that one must conceive of Christianity as a live hypothesis. For Pojman this appears to mean something like that Christianity's truth must be believed to be a real possibility and something that is desirable. But this, I would say, is simply identical to the propositional hope that Christianity is true. So, it seems that in order to have Pojmanian faith with motivational hope one must already propositionally hope that Christianity is true. It is actually this hope that appears to take the place of firm belief in Pojman's account of faith.⁵²² Pojman seems to hold that the motivational hope can be deep or even desperate, when conjoined with the relevant propositional hope.⁵²³

In our terminology, Pojmanian faith with motivational hope seems to entail three aspects of faith: the cognitive, the evaluative-affective, and the practical. I would explicate this as follows. The cognitive and evaluative-affective aspects of Pojman's view comprises the propositional hope that Christianity is true, since propositional hope is both a cognitive and an evaluative-affective attitude. The practical aspect of Pojman's view consists of the motivational hope that one will attain the goals Christianity offers, since this hope equals a practical commitment to Christianity by which a person seeks the goals she desires to achieve. The practical aspect is central in Pojman's view: without exemplifying it one does not have faith. So, in Pojman's scheme faith predominantly calls for the action-oriented motivational hope; mere propositional hope does not suffice for having faith. This is why I call Pojman's view faith with motivational hope.

⁵²² It may be instructive to note that the case at hand is structurally quite similar to the one where a person bets on a horse in order to improve her possibilities of getting the needed money (see the previous section). In an analogous way, the religious doubter bets on Christianity via the commitment in order to improve her possibilities of gaining, say, life after death.

⁵²³ Cf. Pojman 2003, 547. It is perhaps interesting to remark that while the motivational hope that one will attain, say, salvation does not seem to require the firm belief that Christianity is true (since propositional hope suffices), it is compatible with such belief. For example, a person may firmly believe that Christianity is true but that her attaining the goals it offers is very unlikely. If such a person seeks, say, salvation, she would merely motivationally hope that she will attain it.

I argued previously that motivational hope is voluntary whereas propositional hope is not. It follows that in Pojman's account only the practical aspect of faith is voluntary. In Jamesian terms, one does not choose to see Christianity as a live hypothesis worthy of commitment, but it appears to one as such presumably on broadly evidential and emotional/passional grounds. Still, whether one makes the commitment is a voluntary choice, and as long as a person volitionally commits herself to Christianity, she is exemplifying Pojmanian faith with motivational hope.⁵²⁴ If the person ends the commitment, she does not hope in the required way, and so she does not have faith anymore.

Pojman's view of faith is readily compared with Swinburne's Pragmatist view of faith (see section 2.1.3.). Like Pojman, Swinburne highlights the importance of the practical aspect of faith, as in his view having faith basically amounts to seeking certain goals by committing oneself to Christianity. But whereas Swinburne claims that the minimal cognitive requirement for this commitment is a weak belief, that is, the belief that Christian creed is more probably true than any relevant rival creed, in Pojman's account propositional hope suffices. Consequently, as compared to Swinburne, Pojman demands less in the way of belief-that and allows more room for a person's evaluative-affective preferences in choosing to have faith.

According to Pojman, not just agnosticism but even an "interested type of atheism" is a possible religious position.⁵²⁵ In Pojman's view a person can believe that Christianity is not true and yet have faith with hope (cf. Pojman's view on the relationship between hope and belief in section 4.3.1.). But in this case one might ask how this sort of faith with disbelief differs from such in the theists' view inadequate non-realist accounts of faith in which the object of faith is conceived blatantly as non-existent (see e.g. Le Poidevin's account in section 1.1.3.). Pojman does not seem to have really thought about this issue,⁵²⁶ but I suppose that some differences can be detected.

An important dissimilarity is that, unlike the non-realist in question, a disbelieving hoper is not indifferent to the truth of the subject matter in the sense that for her much clearly hinges on whether the things hoped for are true or there to be had, whereas the non-realist has no such concerns (cf. the linguistic interpretation of theological realism in the introduction). I would also say that the non-realist's and the hoper's religious behaviour diverge from each other. Consider worshipping, for example. A straightforward non-realist (again, see Le Poidevin's account in section 1.1.3.) presumably make-believes that there is a God and then addresses this postulated fictional being and acts

⁵²⁴ Cf. Pojman 2003, 546.

⁵²⁵ Pojman 1986a, 230.

⁵²⁶ Consider the following, for example: "Genuinely living as if must be distinguished from pretending. You can pretend and act as though you love your neighbors, for you may believe that it is good policy to give this impression; but in genuinely profound hope the intentional state is different from that of pretending." Pojman 1986a, 225. But this just invites the question how are the intentional states different, and Pojman seems to leave this unanswered.

as if such a being existed.⁵²⁷ The hoper, on the other hand, is seeking for a real being. Her prayer is, as one might say, world-directed. The hoper cries or calls out for what she thinks of not as a posited fiction but as a real being whose existence she disbelieves but nonetheless conceives as a possibility. Analogically, a person may find himself lost in the woods, think it is only a slim possibility that she is mistaken in her belief that she is alone, and yet cry out for a helper and instructions.

Though faith with hope may be compatible with disbelief, Richard Gale and Alexander Pruss have argued that having such faith is morally wrong from the viewpoint of the hoper. Their central argument can be put as follows. Gale and Pruss hold that it cannot be denied that at times there is a conflict between Christian and non-Christian ethics—the latter presumably means some general secular ethics. Their example of such a conflict is whether abortion is permissible. On the supposition that for the hoper the principles of non-Christian ethics are more credible than Christian ones, it seems plausible to argue that in a case of conflict the hoper ought to follow secular principles; following Christian principles in this case amounts to acting immorally from the hoper's point of view. But, Gale and Pruss argue, if a person has faith with hope, she is categorically committed to acting in accordance with Christian principles, and so she is from her viewpoint occasionally committed to acting immorally.⁵²⁸

Gale and Pruss also remark that as an evidentialist Pojman argues that acting on evidentially unjustified beliefs is normally a bad thing, since it can do damage to oneself and others. To take Pojman's example, he holds that "if I want to live a long life and believe that living on alcohol and poison ivy will enable me to do that, I will not attain my desire".⁵²⁹ But this claim, Gale and Pruss point out, seems to just as much condemn having faith with hope, since it entails acting on propositions that lack evidential justification.⁵³⁰ Evidently, it does not matter whether a person believes or merely hopes that living on alcohol and poison ivy will enable her to live a long life, for the negative consequences are the same in both cases if the person acts on the proposition in question.

Some general critique along the lines of Gale and Pruss may be adequate. For Pojman having faith appears to amount to a robust commitment to Christianity,⁵³¹ and one might ask whether such practical commitment is reasonable or justified with mere hope. Then again, one might query Gale's and Pruss's supposition that Christian ethics can at times demand something that is incompatible with secular ethics. It is also debatable whether acting on propositions that lack evidential justification is always a bad thing, since some such actions may be harmless and prudentially worthwhile. So, one could try

⁵²⁷ I am not implying that all non-realists argue in this way, which may even look like a caricature characterisation of theological non-realism.

⁵²⁸ Gale and Pruss 2003, lii. For further discussion, see Pruss 2002; Himma 2006.

⁵²⁹ Pojman 2003, 541.

⁵³⁰ Gale and Pruss 2003, liii.

⁵³¹ See e.g. Pojman 2003, 537.

to argue against Gale and Pruss that having Pojmanian faith with motivational hope is not harmful to anyone and that it can yield some benefits which are otherwise unattainable (cf. the re-evaluation of the role of pragmatic arguments in section 3.3.).

4.3.3 FAITH AS PROPOSITIONAL HOPE—AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW

Whether or not Pojman's account can meet the challenges put forward by Gale and Pruss, I would suggest that there is another way to conceive faith with hope, which may more easily accommodate the critique. In brief, whereas Pojman in his account of faith highlights motivational hope over propositional hope, I would reverse the emphasis: there can be a sort of faith with hope where the propositional hope that Christianity is true is the central aspect and the motivational goal-seeking hope recedes into the background. I shall describe this view of faith as propositional hope in section 4.5., but it is relevant to say something about it at present, too.

Faith as propositional hope is, I think, suitably compared with Plantinga's A/C model of faith. In Plantinga's view having faith ideally involves a strong belief as the cognitive aspect of faith and the right affections, say, finding the believed propositions attractive, as the evaluative-affective aspect of faith (see section 2.2.). But could not the sub-doxastic propositional hope that Christianity is true be seen as the weakest possible instantiation of this kind of faith? For there is at least the "belief that possibly" in the cognitive aspect of faith, and there is a suitable evaluative-affective aspect, namely, the desire that the things hoped for are true. And no doubt the hoper also has other appropriate evaluative-affective tendencies, like longing for God.

What is more, in Plantinga's A/C model the practical aspect of faith is de-emphasised: it does not count as the focal aspect of faith but as acting out one's faith. I would argue similarly with regard to faith as propositional hope. The actions a person's religious propositional hope prompts are not, as in Pojman's account, constitutive to the faith in question but count as acting it out. In addition, I would argue that the actions should be tentative and overridable so that Gale's and Pruss's critique (if successful) is avoided: the propositional hoper should never act in a way that is from her viewpoint immoral. In short, faith as propositional hope amounts to volitionally allowing what one involuntarily propositionally hopes to have a moderate impact in both one's cognitive and practical life. The strength of the impact should correspond to the conceived evidential strength of the propositional content of the hope. Faith as propositional hope is no doubt qualified, but I cannot see why it could not be one type of faith nonetheless.

According to Plantinga's theological views, a person's faith is produced by the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Plantinga admits that for whatever reason the deliverances of the Holy Spirit come in different degrees and so faith has less than ideal instantiations. Given this proviso and the similarities between Plantinga's A/C model and the view of faith as propositional hope, one might

wonder whether Plantinga would be willing to grant that those who have faith as propositional hope have been to some extent instigated by the Holy Spirit. This would anyway fit with the traditional Christian view according to which hope is one of the theological virtues that results from the supernatural grace of God.

Then again, it must be conceded that the traditional Christian view about the virtue of hope is narrower in propositional content than the one presented here. For example, for Aquinas, as J. P. Day describes it, the content of the virtue of hope is just that one will attain eternal happiness in the form of communion with God. According to Day, Aquinas held that this hope for salvation is rational, since it is backed up by a firm belief that there is a God who grants salvation.⁵³² However, according to the view of faith as propositional hope I have been sketching out, the propositions Aquinas take to be firmly believed are also hoped to be true. But perhaps this can mean that the effect of the virtue of hope in a person expands to a wider propositional content.⁵³³

4.4 SCHELLENBERG'S IMAGINATION-BASED VIEW OF FAITH

J. L. Schellenberg has argued that scepticism is in our times the right stance towards religious propositions. However, he does not take this to mean the end of rational religion, but a condition for a new understanding of it. Schellenberg's claim is that a positive justification can be rendered to a kind of non-doxastic imagination-based but still realist view of faith. The propositional content of the faith should in his view be conceived as ultimism, which he defines as the claim that there is a metaphysically and axiologically ultimate reality, in relation to which ultimate good can be attained.⁵³⁴ Schellenberg has written a trilogy on his view of religion. Here I shall mainly make use of the first book of the trilogy, the *Prolegomena to a Philosophy of*

⁵³² Day 1991, 23-25.

⁵³³ Jordan's remark on Christian hope may still be worth considering. His view appears to be in line with Aquinas' understanding. After reviewing Emil Brunner's account of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, Jordan goes on to claim that Christian hope might be best characterised as a confident "eschatological expectation of eternal life and providence". In his view the expectation is confident, since one acts on one's hope. The expectation is also assured, Jordan claims. In his view this assurance need not be based on one's assessment of probabilities, but rather on one's Christian commitment. Jordan holds that it is important to note that Christian hope entails belief in certain theological propositions. He argues as follows: "One hopes in the Christian sense only if one believes in God. And, as many philosophers and theologians have pointed out, 'belief in' presupposes 'belief that'. One can trust someone only if one believes certain things about the person trusted. While hope as such does not entail belief, Christian hope does seem to entail belief." Jordan 2006, 197-198. See Brunner 1956. Jordan's reasoning may not be wholly clear, but his conclusion is: Christian hope is confident and (thus) entails belief. In response one might say that Christian hope can function in the way Jordan described, but otherwise he seems to just beg the question against those who seek to argue that Christian hope can also be a certainty-wise faltering attitude and occur without belief.

⁵³⁴ See e.g. Schellenberg 2009, 1.

Religion (2005). It is in this book where Schellenberg introduces his account of faith which we are mainly interested in.⁵³⁵

Schellenberg does not conceive the propositional content of faith in theistic terms, and so in this sense he is not a theistic philosopher. However, he clearly argues within the analytic theistic tradition and converses with theistic philosophers. His view of faith is also interesting as such and diverges from the views surveyed thus far especially as regards the cognitive aspect of faith. In addition, Schellenberg explicitly discusses the voluntariness of faith in his account and emphasises this issue. These points together make his account of faith worth considering in this study. And, as our discussion on the nature of faith is fairly formal, it is not impossible to apply Schellenberg's insights to Christianity or theism, if that is seen as appropriate. I shall in any case illustrate Schellenberg's view of faith in theistic terms—he does that frequently, too.

As pointed out, Schellenberg highlights voluntariness of faith. More precisely, he claims that faith must be understood as something that is directly voluntary. In his view it is not that we can over time have an influence on whether we have faith, but that we can have faith right now by an act of will and that without will's exertion faith will be lost.⁵³⁶ According to Schellenberg, this view of the voluntariness of faith is well supported by institutional deliberations, theoretical discussions in the philosophy of religion, and in ordinary religious parlance. For example, he says, Christian theologians and church councils have declared that faith is voluntary; theologians have often spoken of faith as meritorious, which seems to entail that it must be voluntary; and religious people warn the faithful against the loss of faith, thus implying that faith is voluntary.⁵³⁷ Schellenberg's view of the voluntariness of faith is very straightforward (for more subtle views see section 2.1.2.). But whatever one thinks about his emphasis, it anyway has a visible impact on his account of faith.

The basis of Schellenberg's view of faith is the distinction between "faith that" and "faith in". He has labelled these attitudes propositional and operational faith respectively. Schellenberg holds that propositional faith involves a kind of voluntary, positive, and assenting attitude toward religious propositions (his elaboration of propositional faith clearly diverges from that of Audi). On the other hand, operational faith in Schellenberg's view is more than a positive propositional attitude in being a sort of positive response to the relevant propositions. Schellenberg holds that operational faith is a matter of trust in its Swinburnian action-focused sense (see section 2.1.2.).⁵³⁸ In our terms, operational faith pertains to the practical aspect of faith, whereas

⁵³⁵ The other books are Schellenberg 2007; 2009. See also Schellenberg 2013b.

⁵³⁶ More precisely, Schellenberg takes three clauses to capture the voluntariness of faith. First is the accessibility clause: anyone who seeks to have faith can have it. Second is the terminability clause: faith can be terminated by those who no longer wish to have it. Third is the vulnerability clause: faith will be lost in the absence of sustaining activity. Schellenberg 2005, 147.

⁵³⁷ Schellenberg 2005, 148–149.

⁵³⁸ Schellenberg 2005, 108–109.

propositional faith concerns the cognitive aspect of it. I will analyse operational faith first, where Schellenberg, though following Swinburne, has some novel remarks to make. His original ideas, however, concern the cognitive aspect of faith, which will be discussed secondly.

4.4.1 OPERATIONAL FAITH AND THE NATURE OF TRUST

Since Schellenberg advances Swinburne's notion of trust, it is appropriate to reiterate it here. So, according to Swinburne, trusting a person is to act on the assumption that she will do for you what she knows that you want, when the evidence gives some reason for supposing otherwise and bad consequences follow if the assumption is false. For example, Swinburne holds, I may trust a friend by lending her a valuable item when she has previously proved to be careless with valuables (one might ask, though, why I should trust her). In this case, Swinburne holds, I act on the assumption that she will do what she knows I want (treat the valuable with care), when evidence (previous experience) indicates that she will not, and bad consequences follow if she does not (the valuable gets damaged).⁵³⁹

Schellenberg concurs with Swinburne's action-emphasising definition of trust. According to him, ordinary language links trust to vulnerability, and there would be no vulnerability or bad consequences if the person who trusts were not disposed to act on her attitude relevant to trust. To illuminate with the previous example, in Schellenberg's view I do not trust my friend (as regards lending the valuable) if I do not lend her the valuable when the situation calls for it. Schellenberg argues that for me to merely assume that the friend will treat the valuable with care is not enough. That is only to assume that the friend is trustworthy; it is not yet to trust her.⁵⁴⁰

Schellenberg argues that the same points go for religious trust, which he illustrates with trust in God. According to him, a person may assume that God will be and do for her what she wants or needs, but if she is never disposed to act on this assumption, she is not trusting God. Consequently, trust in Schellenberg's view involves an action disposition, which emerges in response to the content of the relevant proposition or propositions. He argues that in the religious case the proposition concerns God's good will toward the individual in question, and in response the individual "puts her life into God's hands, deliberately conducting herself in the manner she sees as appropriate to the truth of that proposition".⁵⁴¹

Schellenberg notes that Terence Penelhum has criticised Swinburne's account of trust for overemphasising action. As Schellenberg interprets it, Penelhum suggests that Swinburnean trust is to be called explicit trust, and it should be contrasted with implicit trust, which is a matter of feeling serene and free from anxiety rather than a matter of action disposition. In Penelhum's

⁵³⁹ Swinburne 2005, 143.

⁵⁴⁰ Schellenberg 2005, 110.

⁵⁴¹ Schellenberg 2005, 111.

view it is this latter sort of trust that is ideal for faith.⁵⁴² Schellenberg is critical towards Penelhum's view. He argues that accentuating a sort of trust that is constituted by emotion alone is hard to maintain consistently. In his view it is clearly correct to assimilate trust to an action disposition—he notes that even Penelhum has a tendency to link implicit trust to action. To utilise the previous example, Schellenberg maintains that I may feel serene about how my friend will handle the valuable, but if I do not actually lend the valuable to her when she asks for it, the friend has a good reason to doubt that I trust her in this respect. So, according to Schellenberg, Penelhum's distinction between explicit and implicit trust is inadequate, and so the latter cannot be ideal for faith.⁵⁴³

Despite his critique, Schellenberg takes advantage of the notions of explicit and implicit trust to illuminate another point about trust which is not entirely distinct from that of Penelhum. In brief, Schellenberg maintains that the distinction can refer to how easy or hard it is to do the actions relevant to one's trust. To begin with, Schellenberg stresses that to trust someone is, strictly speaking, not to act in the relevant manner but being disposed to do so. It is not necessary for A now to act toward B in the relevant way in order for A to trust B, for the requirement is only that A is disposed to perform the relevant actions in the appropriate circumstances. Given this, Schellenberg argues that it is possible for A to be naturally disposed to perform the actions, without hesitation or distress, and without even conscious reflection on the propositions involved. In this case, Schellenberg holds, it is appropriate to say that A trusts B implicitly, and, in addition, the disposition in question is a strong one.⁵⁴⁴ For example, if I always lend my valuables to my friend with ease and quite automatically when she asks for them, I trust her implicitly as regards lending the valuables, at least.

Then again, Schellenberg maintains that occasionally one's intention to act, if realised, activates the disposition which constitutes trust. Schellenberg argues that here one is consciously reflecting on what one is doing, most likely because trusting is difficult in this case. This, Schellenberg holds, should be labelled explicit trust. This sort of trust can in his view be, though difficult, strong and unwavering, but it can also be weak, which is the case if, say, the trusting disposition occasionally fails to instantiate.⁵⁴⁵ For example, I may find lending my valuables to my friend a difficult task, because she has proved to be careless with them. But if I nonetheless lend the valuables to her each time when she asks for them, my trust in her is explicit and strong. However, if I only rarely lend her the valuables, my trust is explicit and weak. And if I never

⁵⁴² Penelhum 1995, 72-74; Schellenberg 2005, 111. See also Penelhum 1995, 68.

⁵⁴³ Schellenberg 2005, 112-113. For some further discussion, see Penelhum 2013, 251; Schellenberg 2013a, 281-282.

⁵⁴⁴ Schellenberg 2005, 115.

⁵⁴⁵ Schellenberg 2005, 115.

lend the valuables to her, I do not trust her at all as regards lending the valuables.⁵⁴⁶

Schellenberg holds that similar distinctions can be drawn with respect to trust in God: “This trust may be reflective or unreflective, conscious or unconscious, troubled or relatively untroubled, difficult or easy, implicit or explicit.”⁵⁴⁷ But given Schellenberg’s definitions, one might restore the critique Penelhum made at the outset: instead of explicit trust in God, trust of the implicit sort in conjunction with serenity is ideal for faith.⁵⁴⁸ Schellenberg disagrees, however. Though he maintains that having faith involves trust, serenity is not in his view ideal for faith. He holds that serenity is, instead, the goal of religious faith: “one who attains serenity (or at least complete serenity) seems to have arrived at its [that is, faith’s] destination.”⁵⁴⁹

What is more, according to Schellenberg, the claim that serenity is not ideal for faith is in line with the view that faith is voluntary. For if faith is voluntary, Schellenberg reasons, it is something pretty much anyone can exemplify. But in his view serenity is not like that: it is not something almost anyone can achieve just by trying to. In addition, Schellenberg holds that if an emotional aspect consisting of serenity or freedom of anxiety were essential to having faith, then whether one has faith depends partly on the type of personality one possesses, as some personality types are more given to anxiety than others. But, Schellenberg argues, “the idea that faith is in any way dependent on involuntarily acquired tendencies of the sort we use the label ‘personality’ to cover [...] is highly counterintuitive”.⁵⁵⁰ Still, Schellenberg does not deny that various positive emotions are often possessed by persons who have faith, but in his view such emotions are not entailed by having faith. For example, he says, a person may decide to have faith in order to generate eventually, say,

⁵⁴⁶ A person’s implicit trust can presumably turn into explicit trust (or even mistrust) due to setbacks just as one’s explicit trust can eventually develop into implicit trust, if the object of trust is found out to be trustworthy in the course of time. To take an example of the former situation, Schellenberg holds that a mother may lose her implicit trust in her daughter because of her unexpected bad behaviour. If the mother says of the daughter that “she betrayed my trust, I cannot trust her anymore”, this in Schellenberg’s view means that the mother cannot trust the daughter in the way she did before, but it does not mean that she cannot trust her at all anymore. For the mother still can, if she so chooses, explicitly trust the daughter. Schellenberg 2005, 118. Cf. Penelhum 1995, 73-74.

⁵⁴⁷ Schellenberg 2005, 115.

⁵⁴⁸ Penelhum might agree with this re-evaluation. In his later comments on implicit trust, he argues as follows in reference to Mark 10, where Jesus says that the kingdom of God belongs to little children: “I inferred that children manifest what I called implicit trust, a state of mind in which, I think the text implies, they have innocently never raised any question about what Jesus is teaching them [the children are “serene”], and I supposed Mark’s Jesus commended this as a model of how the ideally faithful adult should be in these matters. I am not interested in rearguing this. I am, however, concerned to note that the childlike acceptance (a clear form of innocence) that Jesus blesses is commonly thought of by his followers as an ideal against which other kinds of faith are to be measured. It is clearly not to be thought of as a choice taken by the children in the face of alternatives [as it would likely be in the case of explicit trust].” Penelhum 2013, 250.

⁵⁴⁹ Schellenberg 2005, 119.

⁵⁵⁰ Schellenberg 2005, 120. Plantinga might retort that there is nothing counterintuitive in saying that an emotional aspect is essential to having faith, for whether you have such faith depends not on your personality quirks, as Schellenberg supposes, but on whether you have been affected by the Holy Spirit. For Schellenberg the cause of the supposed emotional aspect of faith is natural, namely, the person’s personality, whereas for Plantinga the cause of that aspect is supernatural, namely, the Holy Spirit. See section 2.2..

emotional love of God. This example apparently illuminates that this emotional aspect is not necessarily linked to having faith.

In sum, for Schellenberg the practical aspect of faith, which he labels operational faith, consists of voluntary trust in the relevant object. At heart, trusting in his view simply amounts to “a disposition to *act religiously*: [it] may be said to be defined by the extent of one’s religious actions and dispositions to perform them”.⁵⁵¹ Schellenberg maintains that trusting can be easy or hard and more or less reflected, but as long as one decisively does the actions one’s trust calls for, one’s trust is strong. Trusting may be accompanied by different emotions, but in Schellenberg’s view they are not constitutive to trust. Nor does he see any emotion as a necessary aspect of faith, since in his view faith must be voluntary, and emotions are not that generally.

4.4.2 PROPOSITIONAL FAITH AS A VOLUNTARY IMAGINATION-BASED ATTITUDE

When one trusts or simply acts religiously, one does that via having some propositional attitude towards the proposition on which one acts. In other words, exemplifying the practical aspect of faith presupposes that one has some suitable propositional attitude in the cognitive aspect of faith. One possible attitude here is, as Schellenberg says, “unquestioned belief”, which presumably often yields strong implicit trust.⁵⁵² On the other hand, Swinburne, for example, holds that the minimal requirement for trusting God is weak belief (see section 2.1.3.), whereas Pojman would no doubt argue that propositional hope suffices (see section 4.3.2.). These propositional attitudes presumably yield trust of the explicit sort. Schellenberg’s view is in line with these suggestions. He holds that trust can be exemplified with what he calls propositional faith, which he takes to be, among other things, distinct from hope, incompatible with firm belief, and voluntary.⁵⁵³

Schellenberg illuminates the nature of propositional faith with examples where a person moves from a faithless state of mind to having faith that *p*. So, suppose B has assured to A that she will remember to complete a certain important task. A is aware that B has forgotten this sort of thing before. So, given her evidence, A does not really believe that B will do the task, though she does not quite disbelieve it either. After hours of worries, A notes that this unease wastes her mental energy and that she should go with the idea that B will complete the task. Hence, A imagines that B is preparing the task successfully, just as B promised. Focusing on this picture and affirming to herself as often as is needed that B will complete the task, A, while still not believing, has moved to a new mental state where her worries dissipate and

⁵⁵¹ Schellenberg 2005, 124-125.

⁵⁵² Schellenberg 2005, 126.

⁵⁵³ Schellenberg 2005, 126-127, 142.

she is able to get on with other tasks. Schellenberg argues that A has in this case chosen to have faith that B will complete the task.⁵⁵⁴

In the above example propositional faith represents a rather short-term response to an exigency, but Schellenberg notes that the attitude can be a more ongoing disposition, too. His example is a cynical person who has low self-esteem and believes that the world is overall a bad place but then decides to use her imagination to see the world in more optimistic terms. In this case, Schellenberg holds, the pessimistic person has chosen to have faith that she is really okay and that human nature is basically good.⁵⁵⁵ Schellenberg points out that in certain similar examples one might not find faith but, say, acting-as-if or hope, but his conviction is that one might equally find the sort of faith he seeks to illustrate. So, according to him, there is a need to “expand our conceptual repertoire”.⁵⁵⁶

In more precise terms, Schellenberg maintains that propositional faith involves four elements which are discernible in the above examples, too. So, first of all, Schellenberg holds that faith that p is adopted when the evidence is insufficient to cause belief that p—in his view faith that p is even incompatible with belief that p. Secondly, in reference to Alston, Schellenberg argues that a person who has faith that p must think that p is in some way a good thing (cf. Audi’s positive evaluative attitude in section 4.1.1.).⁵⁵⁷ This aspect of propositional faith Schellenberg labels a favourable evaluation.⁵⁵⁸

Thirdly, Schellenberg argues that having faith that p is to purposely picture the world according to p. In his view, having propositional faith is to represent the world, through the power of will and imagination, as having a certain specific character. Schellenberg maintains that this illustrates one difference between propositional faith and belief. The point is, in brief, that with faith one is consciously and deliberately representing the world in a certain way (which, one should note, can turn out to be the accurate way to represent it), whereas in the experience of belief, as Schellenberg puts it, “the world is showing or presenting *itself* to me.” Schellenberg also holds that in propositional faith it may be hard to sustain the representation, but in belief such a difficulty does not arise, since the representation is not voluntarily produced.⁵⁵⁹

Fourthly, Schellenberg holds that faith that p involves a volitional policy of assenting to p: it is deliberately to go along with p as opposed to questioning, criticising, or ignoring it. The assent is to actively prefer p over its denial; it is a resolution to think of p as true. In Schellenberg’s view the proposition assented to exert a certain intellectual influence, and propositions

⁵⁵⁴ Schellenberg 2005, 130.

⁵⁵⁵ Schellenberg 2005, 131.

⁵⁵⁶ Schellenberg 2005, 132 n. 2.

⁵⁵⁷ See Alston 1996a, 12.

⁵⁵⁸ Schellenberg distinguishes this favourable evaluation from desire, as in his view the former does not entail the latter. His example of such a case is a person who may not desire that her rival will win the elections but who may nonetheless from party loyalty or obligation campaign for the rival, and so, as one might say, intellectually evaluate favourably that the rival will win. Schellenberg 2005, 133.

⁵⁵⁹ Schellenberg 2005, 134.

incompatible with it will recede into the background of one's attention. Schellenberg distinguishes this volitional assent from assuming the truth of a proposition, because the latter expression in his view leaves out what he wants to emphasise by propositional faith: that it is something one can do for its own sake and for its intrinsic value and not for the sake of something else, such as action in the case of assuming.⁵⁶⁰ Schellenberg's assent bears a resemblance to the notion of *c**-acceptance, which we discussed in section 4.2.3., as both of these attitudes highlight that propositions can be embraced merely for the sake of their truth.

As a result, Schellenberg holds that *S* has faith that *p* equals the conjunction of the following conditions: (1) *S* lacks evidence causally sufficient for *S* to believe that *p*, (2) *S* considers the state of affairs reported by *p* to be good, (3) *S* persistently represents the world to herself as including that state of affairs, and (4) *S* voluntarily and committedly adopts a policy of assent towards that representation or, more broadly, towards *p*.⁵⁶¹ Schellenberg's next claim is that propositional faith can be directed towards religious propositions, too. According to him, propositional religious faith is a long-term cognitive commitment to actively see the world in a certain way. So, just as exemplifying the practical aspect of faith is often taken to involve a steadfast practical commitment, in Schellenberg's view exemplifying the cognitive aspect of faith involves an ongoing cognitive commitment in the form of propositional faith.⁵⁶²

Though Schellenberg emphasises that adopting propositional faith can have an intrinsic value, he says that the attitude is generally adopted partly because of action-guidance. But, Schellenberg claims, if a person acts on her propositional faith, she is actually manifesting operational faith, that is, trust.⁵⁶³ So, in Schellenberg's view a person may trust God even if all she is doing "is acting on a beliefless attitude of voluntary assent to the relevant religious propositions in pursuing a religious way".⁵⁶⁴ To illustrate, in Swinburne's view trusting in God amounts to worshipping God and seeking salvation for oneself and others (see section 2.1.3.). Schellenberg's claim is that these actions can be based on propositional faith of the relevant sort, which in this case basically amounts to volitionally and constantly imagining and going along with the representation that a Christian God exists.⁵⁶⁵ The sort of trust that goes with propositional faith is most likely explicit, since trusting is quite clearly done without epistemic or emotional assurance. Schellenberg holds that this, rather than Penelhum's serenity, might be a better candidate for the sort of trust that is ideal for faith.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁰ Schellenberg 2005, 134-137.

⁵⁶¹ Schellenberg 2005, 138-139.

⁵⁶² Schellenberg 2005, 137-138.

⁵⁶³ Schellenberg 2005, 139.

⁵⁶⁴ Schellenberg 2005, 140.

⁵⁶⁵ Cf. Schellenberg 2013a, 263-264.

⁵⁶⁶ Schellenberg 2005, 140.

At first glance, Schellenberg's account of faith looks like a non-realist one, since having propositional faith is ultimately just to imagine that the world has a certain character. But non-realism does not seem to be Schellenberg's interpretation. Penelhum has aptly contrasted Schellenberg's account with Richard Braithwaite's non-realist view of faith. According to Penelhum, Braithwaite holds that propositions of faith can be treated as pictures of desirable states of affairs that can inspire persons to pretend that the world is like the propositions say they are and to live an "agapeistic" life.⁵⁶⁷ Braithwaite's view is clearly similar to that of Schellenberg, but Penelhum argues that the distinguishing feature is that in Braithwaite's view the propositions of faith may not be literally true and may even be thought to be false, whereas Schellenberg's account is not compatible with such a conviction. On the contrary, Penelhum holds, one needs to have at least weak evidential support for *p* in order to have a Schellenbergian faith that *p*.⁵⁶⁸

Schellenberg in general agrees with Penelhum's analysis. He holds that having faith that *p* presupposes that one lacks flat-out belief that not-*p*.⁵⁶⁹ One might say that there is no point in having a Schellenbergian faith that *p* if one thinks that there are no chances for *p* being true, whereas in Braithwaite's account of faith the truth value of *p* is not at all relevant.⁵⁷⁰ In my view this shows that Schellenberg's propositional faith is not on its own sufficient for the cognitive aspect of faith, but it must go together with some minimal belief, like belief about possibility. Otherwise Schellenberg's view reduces to non-realist faith. In other words, if not complemented with some minimal belief, Schellenbergian propositional faith is nearly indistinguishable from Braithwaite's non-realism.

Schellenberg has compared his account of faith with some of the views we have considered previously. To begin with, Schellenberg holds that one propositional attitude distinct from propositional faith is hope, which he analyses as a complex attitude including, roughly, a belief about possibility and a desire. (see propositional hope in section 4.3.1.). According to Schellenberg, one difference between these attitudes is that propositional faith, unlike hope, is voluntary. Schellenberg also holds that propositional faith has something more to give to one's cognitive life than hope: "there is an extra element of definiteness and constancy—assent to a certain picture of the world, voluntarily assumed—that makes all the difference."⁵⁷¹ Moreover, contrary to Pojman's assessment (see section 4.3.2.), Schellenberg seems to think that hope, unlike propositional faith, is not a sufficiently strong attitude for the sort

⁵⁶⁷ See Braithwaite 1955. See also Stiver 1996, 72.

⁵⁶⁸ Penelhum 2013, 251.

⁵⁶⁹ Schellenberg 2013a, 282.

⁵⁷⁰ One might nonetheless ask whether having a Schellenbergian faith that *p* is compatible with a flat-out belief that not-*p*. Penelhum appears to think that this is not possible, but Schellenberg seems to suggest otherwise, although he says that "completely confident disbelief might make such faith psychologically impossible". Schellenberg 2005, 132. See Penelhum 2013, 251.

Penelhum 2013, 251.

⁵⁷¹ Schellenberg 2009, 198. Cf. Schellenberg 2005, 142.

of full-fledged practical commitment faith in his view entails (see Schellenberg's operational faith in section 4.4.1.).⁵⁷²

Schellenberg appears to see hope as a rather weak and feeble attitude, but one might argue that at times it can also be lively and vibrant. In such cases the contrast between hope and propositional faith need not be substantial. Even Schellenberg points out that it is possible to beef up the notion of hope so as to include "more positive thoughts and commitment", in which case it turns out to be in his view turns equivalent to his notion of propositional faith.⁵⁷³ Schellenberg holds that it is natural for a person to both hope that *p* and have faith that *p*, but in his view these attitudes do not entail each other.⁵⁷⁴

Schellenberg also compares his view to Alston's acceptance (see section 4.2.). As he interprets it, Alston's acceptance is a matter of taking a proposition "on board" (cognitive acceptance) and using it in one's thinking and behaviour (pragmatic acceptance). In Schellenberg's view his notion of assent (see the fourth element of propositional faith) is very similar to Alston's acceptance, especially to its "taking on board" part.⁵⁷⁵ However, Schellenberg's problem with Alston's view is, in our terms, Alston's way of taking acceptance to cover both the cognitive and the practical aspects of faith. This is in Schellenberg's view a defect, for the aspects require being conceptually distinguished.⁵⁷⁶ This is a reasonable demand, which I have, in fact, tried to follow in this study.

Moreover, Schellenberg appears to make the important point that when the distinction between the cognitive and the practical aspects of faith is made clearly, one can realise that exemplifying, in our terms, a non- or sub-doxastic account of faith can be more than just a practical matter, such as acting on assumptions.⁵⁷⁷ For exemplifying such accounts can have a cognitive significance, too. In general, just like certain beliefs, certain other attitudes like hope and propositional faith (whether Schellenberg's or Audi's) with appropriate contents can have intrinsic value for the persons having them. They need not derive their significance from something else, like from their practical usefulness (cf. the revaluation of the role of the pragmatic arguments in section 3.3.). In my view this is an important consideration which has not been sufficiently emphasised.

Lastly, it should come as no surprise that when Schellenberg comments on James's "The Will to Believe", he holds that it should not be read as commending the will to believe, but the will to have faith or the will to imagine and act correspondingly. Consequently, choosing a hypothesis in a situation of a genuine option can in Schellenberg's outline be seen as a volitional choice to persistently imagine the world as the hypothesis describes it (propositional

⁵⁷² Schellenberg 2009, 198.

⁵⁷³ Schellenberg 2009, 133.

⁵⁷⁴ Schellenberg 2005, 143.

⁵⁷⁵ Schellenberg 2005, 143-144. Actually, Schellenberg's assent does not look like Alston's problematic *c*-acceptance. Instead, as noted, it seems to be closer to the notion of *c**-acceptance. This is for the reason that Schellenberg's assent, like *c**-acceptance, does not really seem to be evidence-dependent in the way Alston's *c*-acceptance is. For a discussion, see sections 4.2.2. and 4.2.3..

⁵⁷⁶ Schellenberg 2005, 145.

⁵⁷⁷ See Schellenberg 2005, 146.

faith) and to act correspondingly (operational faith).⁵⁷⁸ This illustrates the point just made: choosing to exemplify faith without having a firm belief can be more than a practical matter—it can have cognitive import, too.

4.4.3 CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

In sum, according to Schellenberg's account, faith includes propositional faith as the cognitive aspect of faith and operational faith as the practical aspect of faith. Propositional faith basically amounts to volitionally and persistently imagining the world in accordance with relevant faith-propositions, and it can have intrinsic value for the person having it. Operational faith amounts to trust, which fundamentally means acting on the propositions of faith. Of the views analysed in this chapter, Schellenberg's propositional faith seems to be the only one that truly is a non-doxastic and voluntary attitude. Neither Audi's propositional faith, Alston's acceptance, nor Pojman's propositional hope look like a non-doxastic or voluntary attitude. They seem to include or reduce to a belief of some kind, and so they are naturally conceived of as involuntary.

However, as argued, Schellenberg's non-doxastic propositional faith does not alone seem to suffice for the cognitive aspect of faith. Instead, it must be accompanied by some minimal belief, that is, by some sub-doxastic attitude, so that it does not amount to a non-realist position. In rather harsh terms I would say that this means that Schellenberg's propositional faith can only be an ancillary propositional attitude in the cognitive aspect of faith. The essential attitude must be some sub-doxastic attitude that, so to speak, entails realism. This consideration indicates one general conclusion as regards the question of what kind of propositional attitude is required for the cognitive aspect of faith.

As things stand, I find it hard to see how any non-doxastic attitude could play the role that doxastic or sub-doxastic attitudes have in the cognitive aspect of faith. By this I do not imply that besides belief there could not be room—or even need—for some non-doxastic attitude (say, Schellenberg's propositional faith), but just that some kind of belief is required, whether it is a belief about possibility or probability or a degreed belief. So, though I do not straightforwardly exclude non-doxastic attitudes from the cognitive aspect of faith, I wish to highlight that the aspect necessarily requires some sub-doxastic attitude, at the very least. Otherwise non-realism seems hard to avoid.

4.5 FAITH AS PROPOSITIONAL HOPE AND THE VOLUNTARINESS OF FAITH

In this study I have analysed different accounts of faith and pointed out what I take to be their strengths and weaknesses. While doing this I have indicated, especially in connection with Pojman's view of faith (see section 4.3.3.), how

⁵⁷⁸ Schellenberg 2009, 209-210.

faith in my view could be instantiated in the midst of doubt. Though my view in certain important respects differs from that of Pojman, I also find propositional hope to be the appropriate minimal requirement for exemplifying a kind of sub-doxastic faith. In this section I shall elaborate this view, which I have labelled faith as propositional hope, and compare it with other accounts. Subsequently I shall draw this study to a conclusion by considering analytic theists' understanding of the voluntariness of faith on a general level.

4.5.1 FAITH AS PROPOSITIONAL HOPE

In my view the best way to approach faith as propositional hope is by way of considering once again a Jamesian scenario. I am not seeking to explicate what James actually means, though I do think that a promising reconstruction of his view is the one offered here. So, suppose that the Christian hypothesis presents itself to a religious doubter in a Jamesian genuine option, that is, in a case of *q* genuine choice between two hypotheses. Suppose also that the doubter decides to adopt the Christian hypothesis instead of its rival, the rival being some non-religious, secular hypothesis. In my view this adoption should be understood as follows.

When Christianity presents itself in a genuine option to the doubter, it means that the doubter's "intellectual" as well as "passional nature" already disposes her towards adopting the option. This means, first, that the doubter sees that her evidence for the truth of the propositions of Christian faith has some strength, though not enough to yield strong (convinced, flat-out) belief. In other words, the doubter already believes that the propositions of Christian faith have some probability of being true or, as I shall (for convenience's sake) say, are possibly true. Secondly, Christianity's presenting itself to the doubter in a genuine option means that the propositions of Christian faith are attractive to the doubter. That is, she has an emotional pro-attitude towards the propositions or, as I shall say it, she desires that the propositions are true.

But believing that Christianity is possibly true and desiring that it is true in my view implies that the doubter already hopes that Christianity is true. The hope in question is a propositional hope (see sections 4.3.1.-4.3.3.), which is a complex sub-doxastic propositional attitude consisting of belief about possibility (or probability) and a desire (or perhaps some equivalent favourable evaluation or orientation). Propositional hope is not voluntary, as neither of its constituents are generally voluntary. In Jamesian terms, the doubter does not choose to see Christianity as a live hypothesis, but it appears to her as such. (It does not follow that a person who does not at present see Christianity as a live hypothesis could not later see it as such and *vice versa*.)

As to the doubter's adoption of the Christian hypothesis when it presents itself in a genuine option, this in my view amounts to approving, as opposed to rejecting or disregarding, the hope in question and allowing it to play a part in one's mental life. The hope itself may motivate this endorsement, and the

doubter then seeks to bring the hope to mind every now and then and contemplates it, among other things. For reasons to be pointed out, this in my view, strictly speaking, equals adopting faith as propositional hope. As this is a choice the doubter can also withdraw, the choice and going along with it is the voluntary aspect of faith as propositional hope. So, while propositional hope as such is involuntary, it is another thing to voluntarily allow one's propositional hope to live and have influence in one's life. (The same point likely goes for other propositional attitudes, too.) In Jamesian terms, adopting the Christian hypothesis when it presents itself in a genuine option is the doubter's voluntary decision.

The voluntary aspect of faith as propositional hope can be further illustrated by way of Schellenberg's notion of assent. He holds that assent that *p* is a deliberate volitional policy of going along with *p* as opposed to questioning, criticising, or ignoring it (see section 4.4.2.). Faith as propositional hope involves a similar assent or, rather, approval: it includes going along with one's hope instead of ignoring it. What is more, as my wordings suggest, I find it most accurate to conceive of the approval functioning as a second order propositional attitude and what is approved is the first order propositional attitude of hope with the relevant propositional content. The doubter who has faith as propositional hope voluntarily approves that she hopes and she deliberately permits her hope to live instead of denying and disregarding it. This approval need not be incompatible with being critical and responsive to further evidence that may affect one's hope.

The closest relative in its form to the view of faith as propositional hope is Plantinga's A/C model. Like the A/C model, faith as propositional hope consists of a cognitive and an evaluative-affective aspect of faith. In the A/C model there is firm belief and suitable emotions and evaluations; in faith as propositional hope there is belief about possibility and desire (and doubtless other suitable evaluative-affective tendencies). What is more, one could say that, like the A/C model, faith as propositional hope does not, strictly speaking, include any practical aspect. Instead, appropriate actions can be seen as acting out one's faith (for a discussion, see sections 1.2.2. and 2.2.). In the case of faith as propositional hope the relevant actions amount to experimenting with one's faith by agnostic prayer or worship, for example. Seeking to do what from one's viewpoint is good can also be seen as acting out one's faith or at least such conduct can be partly motivated by the faith in question.

In consequence, choosing to have faith as propositional hope is not, again, strictly speaking, a matter of making a practical commitment to propositions one hopes to be true. That is, to utilise the terminology of Bishop's doxastic venture model of faith (see section 3.1.2.), faith as propositional hope is not a matter of taking such propositions to be true in one's practical reasoning which are hoped to be true. This description is unfitting, since, as argued, the view of faith as propositional hope does not include a practical aspect. Still, it is not inappropriate to say that if the doubter acts out her faith as propositional hope,

she is tentatively taking to be true what she hopes to be true. But I would here rather speak of acceptance in Cohen's sense (see section 4.2.), as it is a better-known term in the literature.

Besides the similarities to Plantinga's view, propositional hope as such is functionally analogous to Audi's propositional faith. Both of these attitudes involve a cognitive and an evaluative-affective aspect—in propositional faith the cognitive conviction is simply stronger than in propositional hope. It is natural to think that the doubter's hope that *p* can develop into Audian faith *p* (just as it is natural to think that a person's faith that *p* can turn into the sort of firm belief plus the positive affections Plantinga emphasises) if the doubter's confidence towards the truth of *p* arises due to the accumulation of evidence of some sort. Likewise, a person's faith that *p* can change into the hope that *p*, if the person's confidence towards *p* weakens for some reason. In this respect the evidence-responsive attitudes a person of faith has may have the sort of fluidity Audi speaks of: their strength may change with variations in such variables as emotionality and perceived evidence (see section 4.1.).

The difference between Pojman's view of faith and mine parallels that between Swinburne and Plantinga—and perhaps that between Catholic and Protestant emphases in general. Both Pojman and Swinburne highlight the practical aspect of faith: having faith is basically a voluntary commitment to seek the goals which following the Christian way allegedly offers (see section 2.1.3. and 4.3.2.). I also suppose that Pojman would be ready to argue along with Swinburne that having faith is meritorious. Conversely, in accordance with Plantinga's theological view I am inclined to think of faith in less meritorious and voluntary terms (although faith has a voluntary element). That is, having faith is not so much a matter of meritorious action as having a proper cognitive and evaluative-affective stance towards the subject of Christian faith. According to this view, a practical commitment is a consequence of a person's faith, not a part of it. In addition, in my view the commitment should be tentative, as it is debatable whether a robust commitment is permissible with mere hope (for a discussion, see section 4.3.2.). This point leads us to the next consideration.

Faith as propositional hope is in Paul Helm's terminology an evidential proportion view of faith according to which the strength of faith must be proportioned with the strength of belief. Since the cognitive aspect of hoping is evidentially very weak, I take it to grant only weak and cautious faith. This elucidates another way to differentiate my view from that of Pojman. For Pojman's account, like Swinburne's, appears to be in Helm's terminology closer to an evidential deficiency view of faith, which sees faith as in some way compensating or making up for lack of evidence. In Pojman's view having faith is to make a commitment of such strength that is not warranted by the overall evidence. But, as argued, it is debatable whether such commitments are often permissible (for a discussion of Helm's somewhat messy distinction, see sections 2.1.3. and 3.1.1.).

From the doubter's "philosophical viewpoint" it is no doubt most credible to consider the cause of her hope as a natural one; hoping is responsive to broadly evidential and emotional or passionate grounds (see section 4.3.1.). However, as traditional Christianity claims that having faith is a gift from God, maybe from the "theological viewpoint" the doubter can think of her propositional hope as a sign of having to some extent received supernatural grace and being affected by the Holy Spirit. Perhaps faith as propositional hope can be seen as the weakest possible instantiation of a broadly Plantingian faith. This also illuminates one difference between Swinburne's and Pojman's views on the one hand, and mine and Plantinga's on the other. The former do not really accentuate that faith is a gift from God.

In his *Three Essays on Religion*, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) defended religious hope on prudential grounds. According to him:

Truth is the province of reason, and it is by the cultivation of the rational faculty that provision is made for its being known always, and thought of as often as is required by duty and the circumstances of human life. But when the reason is strongly cultivated, the imagination may safely follow its own end, and do its best to make life pleasant and lovely inside the castle, in reliance on the fortifications raised and maintained by Reason round the outward bounds.

On these principles it appears to me that the indulgence of hope with regard to the government of the universe and the destiny of man after death, while we recognize as a clear truth that we have no ground for more than a hope, is legitimate and philosophically defensible. The beneficial effect of such hope is far from trifling. It makes life and human nature a far greater thing to the feelings, and gives greater strength as well as greater solemnity to all the sentiments which are awakened in us by our fellow-creatures and by mankind at large. It allays the sense of that irony of Nature which is so painfully felt when we see the exertions and sacrifices of a life culminating in the formation of a wise and noble mind, only to disappear from the world when the time has just arrived at which the world seems about to begin reaping the benefit of it. The truth that life is short and art is long is from of old one of the most discouraging parts of our condition; this hope admits the possibility that the art employed in improving and beautifying the soul itself may avail for good in some other life, even when seemingly useless for this.⁵⁷⁹

I am here largely siding with Mill. Although hoping is bitter-sweet, it can offer, for example, meaning and consolation and give us strength to continue in the face of difficulties. In other words, hoping as such has pragmatic benefits. It may be that some of our hopes should be muted by paying no attention to them. But if a religious doubter finds herself hoping that Christianity—or, for that matter, some other suitable worldview—is true and holds that she is better off by having the hope and inflicts no harm by it, is she necessarily acting imprudently if she deliberately allows her hope to live? I am inclined to say no (cf. section 3.3.). It may not be advisable for the doubter to invest too much in her hope. But to say that she is not entitled to hope at all seems to be an exaggeration. Hope may even resist being dispensed with. So why fight against it if it offers solace and other possible benefits?

⁵⁷⁹ Mill, *Three Essays on Religion* (1874), 249-250. See also Jordan 2006, 187-190.

4.5.2 DOXASTIC NON-VOLUNTARISM BUT RELIGIOUS VOLUNTARISM?

In analytic theistic philosophy there appears to be quite a general consensus on the following two ideas. Firstly, it is claimed that faith-belief, like any other belief, is not directly voluntary, which is the same as embracing doxastic non-voluntarism. Secondly, though it is held that faith-belief is involuntary, it is widely argued that having faith is, in some way or another, a voluntary matter. For example, Swinburne and Bishop accentuated that the belief which constitutes the cognitive aspect of faith is largely involuntary. But, they held, the commitment which forms the practical aspect of faith is voluntary. Since in Swinburne's and Bishop's view practical commitment is the central aspect of faith, they in the end maintain that exemplifying faith is in an important sense a voluntary choice.

To take another example, Alston argued—though not convincingly—that while the cognitive aspect of faith is involuntary if constituted by belief, it can be voluntary if constituted by his version of acceptance. In this case, too, having faith is a voluntary choice. Similar considerations were put forward by Pojman as regards hope and Schellenberg as regards his construal of propositional faith. Even Plantinga has a tendency to hold that although faith is largely an involuntary matter, having it requires a willingness to receive it. Consequently, on the whole, analytic theistic philosophers seem to have a tendency to argue against doxastic voluntarism but, as one might say, for religious voluntarism. This was the view I defended, too. I argued that religious hope is involuntary (it is a sub-doxastic attitude), and yet I maintained that having faith as propositional hope is voluntary, since it amounts to volitionally approving one's hope, that is, permitting one's hope to live.

However, while the idea of religious voluntarism seems from one viewpoint quite reasonable, from another viewpoint it may be questioned. The viewpoint that is reasonable might be labelled philosophical. From the perspective of the phenomenology of belief, propositional attitudes, and action theory it seems plausible to argue, as we have seen, that faith includes both voluntary and involuntary elements. What is more, from this perspective one may also argue that the central aspect of faith is voluntary, and this is just to embrace religious voluntarism from a philosophical point of view.

Then again, the viewpoint from which religious voluntarism might be questioned could be labelled theological. From this viewpoint it is not clear whether religious voluntarism is an acceptable position. For that will depend on which theological standpoint one advocates. Perhaps Catholic and especially Orthodox theology may affirm some version of religious voluntarism, as they highlight that faith comes from God but also requires humans' volitional activity. On the other hand, traditional Protestantism has not been very eager to affirm religious voluntarism. According to its emphases, faith is due to God and the importance of human efforts is to some extent diminished.

What these considerations indicate is that there is a need to draw a distinction between philosophical and theological considerations as regards questions relating to the voluntariness of faith. From one viewpoint religious voluntarism may be granted while from the other it may not. This need not yield an inconsistent view. For example, one may argue that some kind of practical commitment is the focal aspect of faith and that from a philosophical viewpoint it is voluntary, because it amounts to practical conduct which clearly requires the will. But at the same time one may from the theological viewpoint argue that the commitment is not actually voluntary, because deep down it occurs due to supernatural grace and the promptings of the Holy Spirit. In fact, love in the sense of being disposed to do good towards others is traditionally conceived of as a God-given theological virtue. Given this, one might argue that even the execution of this virtue is attributable to God, though superficially it may look like a human's commendable volitional behaviour.

SUMMARY

This study was a critical examination of the views about the voluntary aspect of religious faith in contemporary analytic theistic philosophy of religion. In addition, I elaborated the view of faith as propositional hope as a promising alternative for some religious doubters.

In the introduction I pointed out that certain presuppositions of analytic theists are of significance for their discussion on the nature and voluntariness of faith. The central assumptions are theological realism about religious language, that is, linguistic theological realism, and the view that faith is connected with epistemic attitudes. Without these assumptions the problems discussed lose much of their relevance.

In the first proper chapter I analysed analytic theists' general views on the nature of faith and propositional belief. As regards faith, we were chiefly interested in listing different aspects of faith that a view (a model, an account) of faith may entail. I suggested that four aspects can be distinguished: (i) the cognitive, (ii) the evaluative-affective, (iii) the practical, and (iv) the interpersonal aspects. In analytic theistic philosophy the emphasis has been put on (i) and (iii). Some philosophers have also reflected on ideas pertaining to (ii). (iv) has not really received attention in the views we analysed. So, the interpersonal aspect of faith is a topic which may deserve further analysis. The same goes for the possible social or communal aspects of faith.

As regards the nature of propositional belief, in analytic theistic philosophy it is typically taken to aim at truth, to come in degrees, and involve a feeling of conviction. The feeling aspect of belief is in all probability not best seen as a kind of emotional state. Alston, for example, only seeks to illustrate the involuntary nature of belief by the term "feel". Direct doxastic voluntarism, that is, the view that belief is directly voluntary, is widely rejected in analytic theistic philosophy, and this rejection is a central premise in the discussion on the voluntariness of faith.

In the second chapter the key topic was how the beliefs of faith are acquired and the implications this issue has for questions about the voluntariness of faith. The views of Richard Swinburne and Alvin Plantinga were the main focus of this chapter. Swinburne highlights the practical aspect of faith in his Pragmatist view of faith. He maintains that having faith amounts to seeking certain goals, namely, worship of God and salvation to oneself and others. This conduct he equates with trust in God and doing the actions that love of God would lead one to do. Swinburne argues that this aspect of faith is voluntary and exemplifying it deserves merit.

Swinburne holds that the minimum requirement for instantiating the practical aspect of faith is the so-called weak belief, that is, the belief that the Christian creed is more probable than any relevant rival creed, though not necessarily more probable than its negation. This sub-doxastic, less-than-

firm-belief attitude is the cognitive aspect of Swinburne's view of faith. Like many theistic philosophers, Swinburne argues that belief, whether religious or not, is acquired in response to evidence, which can come in many forms. As an evidentialist and a proponent of natural theology Swinburne holds that ideally the evidence for Christian truths consists of substantial arguments. Swinburne maintains that holding Christian belief can be meritorious, though it is not directly voluntary. This is the case if the belief is acquired as a result of voluntarily started impartial investigation.

Plantinga's Aquinas/Calvin model of faith is in many respects dissimilar and even contrary to Swinburne's view. Plantinga does not emphasise the practical but the cognitive and the evaluative-affective aspects of faith: faith is ideally a matter of having a convinced Christian belief and the appropriate affections, such as finding what is believed attractive. In Plantinga's view, Christian belief is held in a basic way, that is, it is held on the grounds of its content just seeming to be true, which I proposed to be a kind of non-propositional evidence. Following traditional Christianity, Plantinga holds that due to sin's effects persons cannot acquire faith by their own efforts, but it must come to them supernaturally through the instigation of the Holy Spirit. In this process, Plantinga maintains, the Holy Spirit also cures persons' damaged *sensus divinitatis*, the sense of divinity, which enables persons to form general theistic beliefs about God in suitable circumstances.

In comparison to Swinburne's view, Plantinga's model does not have much room for volitional elements. Nor does Plantinga imply that faith is meritorious action which God rewards. Instead, faith is in his view a gift from God and it basically amounts to finding oneself with the appropriate cognitive-affective stance towards Christian truths. Still, Plantinga cautiously suggests that coming to have faith may be subsequent to the willingness to have it. This seems to mean some kind of readiness to receive faith instead of being reluctant to have it. Perhaps one could also speak of seeking faith in this respect. This is the voluntary aspect in Plantinga's view of faith. What is more, sustaining and acting out Plantingian faith likely requires the will. Then again, from the theological viewpoint Plantinga might say that due to sin these cannot occur without the constant promptings of the Holy Spirit. In this case it is unclear whether the actions are ultimately up to the persons' own efforts.

The third chapter was chiefly concerned with the possibility of believing without sufficient evidence. The permissibility of such believing was also discussed as part of the topic of the ethics of belief. Views elaborated by John Bishop and Jeff Jordan were central in this chapter. According to Bishop's doxastic venture model of faith, a person of faith makes a full-weight practical commitment to firmly believed faith-propositions—the person “takes to be true” what she “holds true”, in Bishop's terms—while she recognises that evidence does not adequately support the truth of the propositions. Bishop hence emphasises the cognitive and practical aspects of faith in his model. Like Swinburne, he holds that the latter is voluntary and meritorious whereas the former is involuntary, as it entails belief.

The central problem in Bishop's model had to do with the idea of believing without evidence. In Bishop's view such believing is possible, because besides evidence belief can be caused by non-evidential, passional factors, such as emotions and desires. However, in reference to Andrei Buckareff's critique, I argued that only evidential believing is possible in full consciousness. Non-evidential believing is conceptually problematic, since believing on grounds that do not indicate truth is inconsistent with belief's truth-aiming nature. So, Bishop's model of faith does not look like a feasible alternative to those who find the evidence for the propositions of faith wanting.

But while it may not be possible to believe without evidence, it is widely argued that one can acquire a belief in an evidentially uncertain proposition by means that involve manipulating one's doxastic states. This claim was defended by Jeff Jordan, who argues for religious belief on pragmatic grounds. His discussion is motivated by the insight that pragmatic reasons to believe do not yield belief: they are not truth- but utility-indicating reasons, which are a sub-class of non-evidential reasons for belief. Thus, as Jordan argues, some sort of belief-inducing technique is necessary in order to acquire pragmatically vindicated belief.

Jordan's claim was basically that a pragmatically vindicated belief that *p* can be acquired via volitionally supposing and acting as if *p* were true. However, I argued that merely supposing and acting as if *p* were true are not truth-indicating evidential reasons for *p*, and so they do not yield belief that *p*. In its place, following Richard Foley's initial considerations, I argued that belief-manipulation requires intentional self-deception by which a person deceives herself into a misguided state where she thinks she has sufficient evidence to ground belief. My conclusion was that while such self-deception may not be impossible, it is a course of action which does not guarantee success.

Besides being a difficult task to fulfil, believing or seeking by self-deception to believe against one's better epistemic judgment goes against the dominant ethics of belief, namely, Evidentialism, which was defined as the view that beliefs ought to be formed, sustained, and renounced on the basis of adequate evidence. In this connection we also discussed whether pragmatic arguments for religious belief can override the demands of Evidentialism. While we noted that this may sometimes be the case, I suggested that pragmatic arguments can be reinterpreted as vindicating not just belief or faith which entails belief but faith without firm belief, such as faith with hope. This understanding of the arguments does not usually necessitate forming beliefs by self-deceptive means. So, the arguments do not require going against Evidentialism, which is no doubt a good feature.

In the fourth chapter I analysed allegedly non-doxastic views of faith which claim that faith need not entail any kind of belief, as there are viable alternatives to it. This chapter was preoccupied with views put forward by Robert Audi, William Alston, Louis Pojman, and J. L. Schellenberg. Lastly, I elaborated my view of faith as propositional hope. According to Audi, another

religiously significant attitude besides belief is propositional faith. He holds that as regards confidence about the truth of a proposition, propositional faith is weaker than firm belief but stronger than hope. Unlike belief and like hope, propositional faith in Audi's view involves a positive evaluative attitude. Hence, in addition to the cognitive aspect of faith, propositional faith covers at least partly the evaluative-affective aspect.

Audi argues that propositional faith is a non-doxastic attitude, that is, it does not involve belief of any kind. However, taking Alston's and Dana Radcliffe's critiques against Audi into account I argued that propositional faith is most plausibly explicated as a complex propositional attitude which consists of a degreed belief and a positive evaluative attitude, and so it seems in fact to be a sub-doxastic attitude. Audi claims that propositional faith is not voluntary but responsive to broadly evidential and emotional grounds. I noted that Audi's view is basically similar to that of Plantinga: propositional faith can be seen as a confidence-wise weaker instantiation of the sort of faith Plantinga highlights.

Alston argued that his notion of voluntary acceptance can be a viable substitute to belief in faith. According to him, to accept that *p* is to accept *p* as true (cognitive acceptance) and to use *p* in one's practical reasoning (pragmatic acceptance). Alston's acceptance thus covers both the cognitive and the practical aspects of faith. In Alston's view acceptance is evidence-dependent: one must have some evidence for *p* in order to accept *p*. Audi and Vahid argued that the cognitive aspect of Alston's acceptance ("accept as true") actually equals to or entails belief. In addition, Audi claimed that the cognitive acceptance is involuntary. Hence, Alston's acceptance does not seem to be a viable alternative to belief. In the end it may be, as Bishop suspected, that Alston's notion of acceptance is simply confused. But this is not to say that there are no other cogent notions of acceptance, such as that of Cohen (cf. pragmatic acceptance).

Pojman held that faith is feasible with hope. In our terms, Pojmanian faith is to motivationally hope that one will attain the goals of Christianity while propositionally hoping that Christianity is true. The motivational hope is a practical commitment to seek the goals in question, and thus it forms the practical aspect of Pojman's view of faith. The propositional hope is roughly a belief about possibility plus a positive evaluation, and so it covers the cognitive and the evaluative-affective aspects of faith. For Pojman the practical aspect, that is, the motivational hope, is the focal aspect of faith. In this respect his account of faith bears a resemblance to Swinburne's view. Pojman maintains that hoping is mostly voluntary, but when the distinction between motivational and propositional hopes is taken into account, I argued that only the former are voluntary. So, in Pojmanian faith with hope the practical aspect is voluntary whereas the other aspects are not.

Schellenberg argued that faith is feasible as a kind of voluntary imagination-based behaviour. His view consists of propositional and operational faith. The former has to do with the cognitive aspect of faith while

the latter concerns the practical aspect. Schellenberg equals operational faith with trust in the Swinburnean action-emphasising sense of the term: religious trust is basically a disposition to act religiously. Schellenberg argues that trust can be exemplified with his version of propositional faith, which is roughly equivalent to a voluntary resolution to imagine the world in a religious way. In his view such imagining can have intrinsic value for the person who exemplifies it.

Schellenberg seems to be the only one who has with some credibility argued that there is room for a directly voluntary propositional attitude in the cognitive aspect of faith; Alston and Pojman failed to establish their cases. However, one may query whether Schellenberg's non-doxastic propositional faith is alone adequate for the cognitive aspect of faith. As we argued, if faith that *p* is not accompanied by some minimal belief, say, belief that *p* is possible, it seems to amount to a non-realist position. So, to put it crudely, Schellenberg's propositional faith can be only an ancillary attitude in the cognitive aspect of faith. The primary attitude must be some sub-doxastic attitude, some minimal belief, which, so to speak, entails realism.

I proposed a view of faith as propositional hope. According to this account, to have faith is to voluntarily allow one's involuntary propositional hope that Christianity is true to have an impact on one's mental life. Propositional hope is a sub-doxastic propositional attitude. It consists of belief about possibility or probability and a desire or some positive evaluation. Because of this, faith as propositional hope involves the cognitive and the evaluative-affective aspects of faith. The practical aspect is not included, but suitable actions count as acting out one's faith. Moreover, the actions should be tentative, since it is not clear whether or how often strong practical commitments are permissible with such epistemically weak attitudes as hope. I suggested that faith as propositional hope may fit in a broadly Plantingian scheme as the weakest possible instantiation of the A/C model of faith. In its form Plantinga's model is in any case the closest relative to the view of faith as propositional hope.

In light of what has been said some comments can be made about what it may mean in Jamesian terms to adopt the Christian hypothesis, when it is seen as a live hypothesis or a hypothesis involved in a genuine option. Firstly, it seems that a person who sees Christianity as a live hypothesis must already have some uncertain but nonetheless apposite cognitive and evaluative-affective attitudes towards Christianity. As regards the evaluative-affective attitudes, they consist of various positive evaluations and emotions. Concerning the cognitive attitude alone, it seems that it is best conceived in sub-doxastic terms as a belief of some kind or degree, since it is hard to see what else it could be. This is because such propositional attitudes as hope and Audi's faith, which are *prima facie* non-doxastic attitudes, ultimately appear to reduce to complex attitudes whose cognitive components consist of a belief of some kind. The cognitive and evaluative-affective attitudes in question are not directly voluntary, but arise due to broadly evidential and emotional or passional factors. Maybe from the Christian or theological viewpoint having

these attitudes could be seen as signs of having been to some extent instigated by the Holy Spirit.

As to adopting the Christian hypothesis, this is likely best conceived as a person deciding to let the stated pre-existing cognitive and evaluative-affective attitudes have an impact on her mental and practical life. Such adoption can be explicated in terms of some suitable notions of acceptance, such as pragmatic acceptance and a specific kind of cognitive acceptance. The adoption is then a matter of putting the hypothesis into practice (pragmatic acceptance) and it has intrinsic mental significance, too (cognitive acceptance). While seeing Christianity as a live hypothesis is not something one can directly produce at will, adopting or accepting it is at least from the philosophical viewpoint a voluntary decision. So, instead of James's slogan "The Will to Believe" I would prefer "The Will to Accept". But whether adopting the Christian hypothesis is a voluntary decision from the theological viewpoint is not obvious. That will depend, for example, on the presumed theological views about the nature and scope of God's grace.

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